COMMENTARY

Volume V

January, 1947—June, 1948

34 West 33rd Street

New York 1, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INDEX TO VOLUME FIVE

General Index	Page
Arendt, Hannah. *To Save the Jewish Homeland*	398
Babel, Isaak. *In the Cellar* (A Story)	41
Baldwin, James. *The Harlem Ghetto: Winter 1948* (From the American Scene)	165
Becker, Fritz. *The New Jews of San Nicandro*	346
Becker, George J. *Books About Everyday Jews*	334
Bell, Daniel. *"Screening" Leaders in a Democracy* (The Study of Man)	368
Bendiner, Robert. *Civil Liberties and the Communists*	423
Bentwich, Norman. *Aden After the Riots*	449
Bernstein, David. *Jewish Insecurity and American Realities*	119
Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Victim's Image of the Anti-Semite* (The Study of Man)	173
Cohen, Elliot E. *Mr. Zanuck's "Gentleman's Agreement"*	51
Crossman, Richard H. S. *The Role Britain Hopes to Play*	493
Dewey, John. *William James' Morals and Julien Benda's*	46
Dizengoff, Meier. *Death With a Kiss* (Cedars of Lebanon)	465
Eleazar of Mayence. *Testament* (Cedars of Lebanon)	269
Fiedler, Leslie A. *Let Nothing You Dismay* (A Story)	229
Gedye, G. E. R. *Prague: I Saw It Happen Twice*	291
Gersh, Harry. *The Jewish Paintner* (From the American Scene)	64
Goldbloom, Maurice J. *The Month in History*	57, 157, 254, 350, 452, 544
Goldin, Grace. *I Remember Tulsa* (From the American Scene)	263
Goodenough, Erwin R. *Needed: Scientific Study of Religion* (The Study of Man)	272
Gray, J. Glenn. *Munich University: Class of '50*	440
Gregorovius, Ferdinand. *Lament of the Children of Israel in Rome* (A Poem) (Cedars of Lebanon)	171
Gringauz, Samuel. *Our New German Policy and the DP's*	508
Gumbiner, Joseph H. *Existentialism and Father Abraham*	143
Ha'am Ahad. *Jewish and Christian Ethics* (Cedars of Lebanon)	362

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Handlin, Oscar. *Our Unknown American Jewish Ancestors* 104

Heisler, Kalman. *Tailor Boys* (A Poem) 239
A Letter (A Poem) 339

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Two Great Traditions* 416

Hook, Sidney. *Why Democracy Is Better* 195

Horowitz, David. *Founding the New State* 97

Howe, Irving. *Spruceton Jewry Adjusts Itself* (From the American Scene) 552

Hunt, Hamlen. *Tonight We Eat Leaning* (A Story) 340

Kaplan, Milton. *Atomic Bomb* (A Poem) 262

Kimche, Jon. *Middle East Moves and Counter-Moves* 214

Kligsberg, Moses. *The Golden Land* (The Study of Man) 467

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Psychiatry for Everything and Everybody* 222

Kristol, Irving. *How Basic is "Basic Judaism"?* 27

Kurth, Gertrud M. *The Complex Behind Hitler's Anti-Semitism* (The Study of Man) 77

Lehrman, Hal. *Partition in Washington: An Inquiry* 205

Is Italy Next? 297

What U. S. Support Means 485

Lichtheim, George. *England: The Citizen on Trial* 1

Lowe, Florence. *A Citizen of Syracuse* (From the American Scene) 358

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *A Speech on Jewish Emancipation* (Cedars of Lebanon) 70

Mangan, Sherry. *France: Is De Gaulle Fascist?* 8

Mann, Thomas. *Nietzsche in the Light of Modern Experience Part II* 149

Marck, Claudia. *Conversions* (A Story) 432

Marlowe, John. *How Deal With Arab Nationalism?* 317

McWilliams, Carey. *Equality or Fraternities?* 407

Mills, C. Wright. *"Grass-Roots" Union With Ideas* 240

Orlansky, Harold. *Destiny in the Nursery* (The Study of Man) 563

Raab, Earl. *In Promised Dixieland* (From the American Scene) 460

Raskin, A. H. *All-Out War on the Production Front?* 532

153559

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

General Index	Page
"Returned Chaplain." *Why I Gave Up My Congregation*	233
Ripley, Josephine. *The Climate Shifts on Immigration*	35
Rosenberg, Isaac. *Spring 1916* (A Poem)	34
Break of Day in the Trenches (A Poem)	
Samuel, Maurice. *Who Can Translate Yiddish?*	498
Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Situation of the Jew*	306
Portrait of the Inauthentic Jew	389
Gentile and Jew	522
Schwartz, Harry. *Has Russia Solved the Jewish Problem?*	128
Schneour, Zalman. *Newspapers* (A Story)	137
Sloan, Jacob. *And So Be Done* (A Poem)	110
The Moneylender of Venice	248
By the River (A Poem)	539
Teller, J. L. *The Male-Forest of Tarnopol* (A Story)	540
Tillich, Paul. *Martin Buber and Christian Thought*	515
Tschernichowsky, Saul. *Grandfather Sails to Odessa* (A Poem) (Cedars of Lebanon)	559
Weltsch, Robert. *Above All, Avert War!*	324
Werner, Alfred. *Soutine: "Dedicated Traditionalist"*	435
Why I Gave Up My Congregation	233
Wilson, Edmund. *Paul Rosenfeld: Three Phases*	111

Stories and Poems	Page
Babel, Isaak. *In the Cellar*	41
Fiedler, Leslie A. *Let Nothing You Dismay*	229
Gregorovius, Ferdinand. *Lament of the Children of Israel in Rome* (A Poem) (Cedars of Lebanon)	171
Heisler, Kalman. *Tailor Boys* (A Poem)	239
A Letter (A Poem)	339
Hunt, Hamlen. *Tonight We Eat Leaning*	340
Kaplan, Milton. *Atomic Bomb* (A Poem)	262
Marck, Claudia. *Conversions*	432

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stories and Poems	Page
Rosenberg, Isaac. *Spring 1916* (A poem)	34
Break of Day in the Trenches (A poem)	434
Schneour, Zalman. *Newspapers*	137
Sloan, Jacob. *And So Be Done* (A Poem)	110
By the River (A Poem)	539
Teller, J. L. *The Male-Forest of Tarnopol*	540
Tschernichowsky, Saul. *Grandfather Sails to Odessa* (A Poem) (Cedars of Lebanon)	559

Departments

Cedars of Lebanon

Dizengoff, Meier. *Death With a Kiss*	465
Eleazar of Mayence. *Testament*	269
Gregorovius, Ferdinand. *Lament of the Children of Israel in Rome* (A Poem)	171
Ha'am, Ahad. *Jewish and Christian Ethics*	362
Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *A Speech on Jewish Emancipation*	70
Tschernichowsky, Saul. *Grandfather Sails to Odessa* (A Poem)	559

From the American Scene

Baldwin, James. *The Harlem Ghetto: Winter 1948*	165
Gersh, Harry. *The Jewish Paintner*	64
Goldin, Grace. *I Remember Tulsa*	263
Howe, Irving. *Spruceton Jewry Adjusts Itself*	552
Lowe, Florence. *A Citizen of Syracuse*	358
Raab, Earl. *In Promised Dixieland*	460

Letters from Readers	83, 180, 278, 376, 473, 570

The Month in History

Goldbloom, Maurice J.	57, 157, 254, 350, 452, 544

The Study of Man

Bell, Daniel. *"Screening" Leaders in a Democracy*	368
Bettleheim, Bruno. *The Victim's Image of the Anti-Semite*	173

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENTS

THE STUDY OF MAN — PAGE

Goodenough, Erwin R. *Needed: Scientific Study of Religion* 272

Kligsberg, Moses. *The Golden Land* 467

Kurth, Gertrud M. *The Complex Behind Hitler's Anti-Semitism* 77

Orlansky, Harold. *Destiny in the Nursery* 563

BOOKS REVIEWED

Abrahams, Peter. *The Path of Thunder* (James Baldwin) 378

Aleichem, Sholom. *Inside Kasrilevke* (Stephen Seley) 480

American Jewish Year Book, Volume 49 (Oscar Handlin) 288

Auden, W. H. *The Age of Anxiety* (John Berryman) 282

Baeck, Leo. *The Pharisees, and Other Essays* (R. Travers Herford) 192

Baer, Yitzhak F. *Galut* (Milton Himmelfarb) 478

Baron, Salo Wittmayer. *Modern Nationalism and Religion* (George N. Shuster) 381

Bauer, Florence Marvyne. *Abram Son of Terah* (Isa Kapp) 580

Beer-Hofmann, Richard. *Jacob's Dream* (Stephen Spender) 87

Bellow, Saul. *The Victim* (Martin Greenberg) 86

Bickerman, Elias. *The Maccabees* (Milton Himmelfarb) 574

Brand, Millen. *Albert Sears* (James Baldwin) 378

Buber, Martin. *Between Man and Man* (Joseph H. Gumbiner) 482

Eckardt, A Roy. *Christianity and the Children of Israel* (Irving Kristol) 385

Fairchild, Henry Pratt. *Race and Nationality as Factors in American Life* (Oscar Handlin) 476

Feiling, Keith. *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (Samuel J. Hurwitz) 94

Goitein, S. D. (ed.) *From the Land of Sheba: Tales of the Jews of Yemen* (G. Levi Della Vida) 91

Goodman, Abram Vossen. *American Overture* (Herbert B. Ehrmann) 93

Haydn, Hiram. *The Time is Noon* (Elizabeth Hardwick) 477

Heine, Heinrich. *The Rabbi of Bacherach: A Fragment* (Heinz Politzer) 286

Herzog, Wilhelm. *From Dreyfus to Pétain* (N. A. Pelcovits) 190

Himes, Chester. *Lonely Crusade* (Milton Klonsky) 189

Katkov, Norman. *Eagle at My Eyes* (Nathan Glazer) 281

Kautsky, Benedikt. *Teufel und Verdammte* (Alfred Werner) 284

Kogon, Eugen. *Der SS-Staat* (Alfred Werner) 284

Lewis, Sinclair. *Kingsblood Royal* 378

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books Reviewed	Page
Maimon, Solomon. *An Autobiography* (Heinz Politzer)	286
Patai, Raphael. *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (Theodor H. Gaster)	578
Reavey, George. *Soviet Literature Today* (Martin Thomas)	576
Shapiro, Karl. *Trial of a Poet, and Other Poems* (Heinz Politzer)	384
Shneiderman, S. L. *Between Fear and Hope* (Hal Lehrman)	89
Simon, Yves. *Community of the Free* (Gertrude Himmelfarb)	581
Sumner, Cid Ricketts. *Quality* (James Baldwin)	378
Thomas, Will. *God is for White Folks* (James Baldwin)	378
Warren, Robert Penn. *The Circus in the Attic and Other Stories* (Nathan Glick)	577
Webb, Beatrice. *Our Partnership* (George Lichtheim)	573
Werfel, Franz. *Gedichte aus den Jahren* (Erich Kahler)	186
West, Rebecca. *The Meaning of Treason* (R. W. Flint)	383
White, Llewellyn. *The American Radio: Report from the Commission on Freedom of the Press* (James Rorty)	92
Zweig, Arnold. *The Axe of Wandsbek* (George J. Becker)	185

Reviewers

Baldwin, James.	378	Hurwitz, Samuel J.	94
Becker, George J.	185	Kahler, Erich.	186
Berryman, John.	282	Kapp, Isa.	580
Della Vida, G. Levi.	91	Klonsky, Milton	189
Ehrmann, Herbert B.	93	Kristol, Irving.	385
Flint, R. W.	383	Lehrman, Hal.	89
Gaster, Theodor H.	578	Lichtheim, George.	573
Glazer, Nathan.	281	Pelcovits, N. A.	190
Glick, Nathan.	577	Politzer, Heinz.	286, 384
Greenberg, Martin.	86	Rorty, James.	92
Gumbiner, Joseph H.	482	Seley, Stephen.	480
Handlin, Oscar.	288, 476	Shuster, George N.	381
Hardwick, Elizabeth.	477	Spender, Stephen.	87
Herford, R. Travers.	192	Thomas, Martin.	576
Himmelfarb, Gertrude.	581	Werner, Alfred.	284
Himmelfarb, Milton.	478, 574		

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

ENGLAND: THE CITIZEN ON TRIAL

"Decency is Not Enough"

GEORGE LICHTHEIM

LONDON

". . . The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity. . . ." (W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming").

IT IS becoming a truism that for Britain much more than the Labor government's fate is at stake in the present struggle to deal with the country's economic problems. Success or failure, it is now frequently being said, will determine the survival or destruction of liberal-democratic institutions in Britain. As Sir Stafford Cripps phrased it in the House of Commons, October 23, 1947, "If our economy . . . should collapse, our democracy will in all probability collapse too, and will disappear, and with it will go the last stronghold of Western democratic civilization in Europe."

The ready assent to these judgments by members of all parties—the main difference being that Conservatives and Liberals question the Labor government's ability to prevent the threatened collapse – is itself indicative of the sharpness with which the destruction of the old equilibrium in economic affairs, and the effort to establish a new equilibrium on a different plane, has posed the question of social stability. At the same time it reflects the degree to which a somewhat simplified notion of economic determinism has become common ground. Statements such as that quoted above fit into the typical *Weltanschauung* of modern British politicians and historians, according to whom the Weimar Republic was destroyed by its failure to deal effectively with mass unemployment in a period of acute business depression. Though this particular liberal-democratic weakness of mass unemployment in the face of economic instability is not a present threat in Britain, it does not follow that no threat exists.

Notwithstanding the new economic deter-

AGAINST a background of deepening economic crisis and international conflict, the British Labor government doggedly hammers out its socialist program. As the government's program develops—and with it signs of social unrest—the Brtish citizenry is called upon to endure new sacrifices and new challenges. Here, GEORGE LICHTHEIM discusses these problems emphasizing recent anti-Semitic disturbances which, as one of the signs of Britain's distress, raise important questions as to what can and must be expected of the population in a liberal-democratic country. Mr. Lichtheim is London correspondent for two Palestinian dailies, the English-language *Palestine Post,* and the Hebrew *Davar,* and a regular contributor to the London *Tribune.* Mr. Lichtheim lived in Palestine from 1934 to 1945.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ministic emphasis, a good deal of the old "idealist" dualism also survives in the British public mind. Cripps himself gave an example of this when in the same speech he said: "There is not one of us who is not acutely aware today of the high hopes and splendid ideals that inspired so many of our own people to make the supreme sacrifice in these wars. It is for us to carry on those torches of democracy. . . . We can bring them to the door of the temple of their hopes if only we will live with the same spirit of devotion to our country. . . . I wish that today our country could refresh its heart and mind with a deep draught of . . . Christian faith. . . . " It will be seen from these quotations that socialists are not immune to the intellectual fashion which in our society inclines people to assume that—to quote John Dewey (COMMENTARY, October 1947)—"discussion is moral in the degree in which it consists of complaints about what exists and exhortations about what *should,* or 'ought' to, exist." It need only be added that Cripps received an ovation from all parts of the House when he had concluded his peroration. On the other hand, his speech produced no noticeable effect on the coal production figures, which remained obstinately low.

THE whole incident may be read as another demonstration in the continuing debate on the real or pretended virtues of the average citizen in a liberal society, a debate whose flagging impetus has been revived by the partial collapse of the market economy. Under strict laisser-faire rules, the citizen, as Dr. Hayek has pointed out, is under no moral compulsion to perform services greater than those which enlightened self-interest demands. Obligation therefore becomes a matter of complying with a set of rules having something of the force and the anonymity of physical "law." This fact automatically relieves the state of the task to which the British Labor government is proving so unequal: that of making people do more work than is strictly necessary from their individual point of view. Under a regime of industrial full employment and cradle-to-grave social security, exhortation suddenly assumes a *social* importance. But of course exhortation is not enough, especially in a period of universal consumer goods shortages when it may be difficult to supplement exhortation by holding a large enough carrot in front of the donkey.

To the historian, if he is also a socialist, this may be no more than a problem of managing the transition from the old society to the new, with a new appropriate scale of values, including quasi-universal recognition of the citizen's obligation to do his or her best for the general good of society. It must be recognized, however, that for the politician or the labor leader who has to manage the transition it is rapidly becoming the most burning of all issues. He cannot, like Hitler (and other totalitarians), crack the whip too hard, for fear of being denounced, and probably overthrown, as an enemy of liberty. On the other hand, he dare not trust to the effect of exhortation alone, and he may find it difficult, for vulgar utilitarian reasons or possibly because of trade union resistance, to introduce a graded scale of economic rewards, that reserve the biggest carrots for those performing the most vital tasks, e.g. farming or mining.

Placed between impossible alternatives, he is apt to fall back on a mixture of threats and blandishments, inevitably giving the impression that he feels less certain at heart about the ubiquity of actual or potential good citizenship than he would like to believe and to make others believe.

Nevertheless, short of the extreme case of those who despair of democratic institutions and seek for a solution in one or the other form of totalitarianism, he remains wedded to the assumption that most, if not all, people are fundamentally responsive to the demands of good citizenship. If he is British, he is likely also to feel that decency, tolerance, and good humor are the prerequisites of civilized life, and that fortunately these qualities are still to be found in abundance in Great Britain, whatever the unhappy state of other European or overseas countries.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT MAY seem both far-fetched and captious to contrast this relatively optimistic appraisal with the recent evidence concerning the growth of fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies in Britain. Neither the revival of Mosley's organization nor the rowdy anti-Jewish meetings in London's East End are, after all, comparable in significance with such symptoms of social disintegration as the spread of black marketeering or the obstinate failure of output to keep pace with social demand—not only in coal, but throughout a whole range of relatively unattractive basic industries and occupations—despite all governmental efforts to stimulate production.* Nevertheless the matter is of importance, to Britain as much as to the Jewish community, because of the insight it affords into some of the less obvious implications of the national cult of "decency" as the foundation of good citizenship.

To begin with the facts. The growth of anti-Semitic and fascist tendencies is a matter of common observation. In some respects it dates back to the emergence of Hitler and the resultant spread of "Jew-consciousness" throughout the population. In its more recent and more virulent form it seems to reflect a compound of social influences ranging from the fall in middle-class living standards and the loss of control over certain imperial dependencies to the advent of the Labor government and the undue prominence given to Jewish-Gentile antagonism by the conflict in and around Palestine. How seriously the latter is affecting the climate of opinion in important sections of the governing class as well as the lower strata is evident from an article in the *Economist* (October 18, 1947) which bluntly accused Whitehall officialdom of pandering to anti-Semitism. That a large—if not the largest—section of the popular press has been doing the same for years is also common knowledge. In this respect Palestine has channeled and catalyzed public sentiment rather than created it, though a special edge was given to it by the terrorist murders. Their chief effect in this connection perhaps has been to render anti-Semitism socially acceptable in circles hitherto closed to any overt expression of such sentiments. (This was the burden of the argument in the *Economist* article already mentioned, which on this ground advised the government to dissociate itself from the whole Palestine complex as being likely to inflame popular feeling in Britain—since the war "the residuary legatee of the maleficent heritage of European anti-Semitism.")

AGAIN, those present at the recent Conservative party conference (Brighton, October 1 to 4) were made uncomfortably aware of the extent to which this party, despite the restraining influence of its upper-class leadership, has become susceptible to aggressive, chauvinistic, and barely veiled anti-Semitic tendencies. These well up from the strata of society most conscious of the extent to which their own and Britain's position in the world has been threatened by the pressure of social and economic forces vaguely identified with America ("Jewish Bankers") on the one hand and the Soviet Union ("Jewish Communists") on the other.

Finally, there is the visible demonstration afforded weekly to those who make the Sunday morning pilgrimage to London's East End in order to watch dense crowds listening without apparent disapproval to harangues of a type with which visitors to Germany became familiar in the years preceding the collapse of liberal democracy in that country. That the police have been alleged to view these meetings with greater tolerance than the attempts of Jewish or Communist hecklers to break them up is probably less important than the success of fascist speakers in attracting considerable audiences, and

* Little notice has been taken of a recent remark addressed by Mr. Aneurin Bevan to his fellow-countrymen (and former fellow-miners) in South Wales: the men of his generation, he is reported to have said, would have done more to keep a Labor government in office. Mr. Bevan is still under fifty. When he said that "the miner of today is not the kind of man with whom I worked in the pits," he was passing judgment on a generation which exchanged the South Wales miner's characteristic mixture of evangelical Christianity and "belief" in socialism—for what? Very likely for the standards of Hollywood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the evidence that Jew-baiting and red-baiting are eagerly listened to: the two go together in view of the speakers' characteristic attempt to portray Communism as "Jewish" (and Palestinian terrorism as "Moscow-inspired"—a reading of events also favored by certain Catholic publications of unimpeachable respectability).

These meetings are frequently noisy and sometimes violent; their real significance would nevertheless seem to lie in the effect they are having on a proportion of those "quiet citizens" who are normally apostrophized by the editorial writers and the respectable politicians as the ultimate judges of social issues. That some Jews who live in the area have been driven frantic by evidence of virulent Jew-hatred, and that others are reacting by joining the Communists, is noteworthy but hardly important; what matters is that most of their Gentile neighbours are showing little emotion about the whole matter. The most that can be said is that a number of them object to having their Sunday quiet disturbed by loudspeakers blaring out rival speeches at nearby street corners.

It is against this unpromising background that so distinguished a writer as Rebecca West has recently come forward with a series of articles in the *Evening Standard* analyzing the spread of popular anti-Semitism and advising the decent citizen to join in wholehearted but quiet and respectable condemnation of this disease of the mind. The net effect of these articles is to make one realize that decency, to paraphrase the words of another Englishwoman, is not enough.

The burden of Miss West's grievance against the fascists (and the anti-fascists) is that they make the enjoyment of the English Sunday impossible for the quiet householder and his family, by their strident demonstrations, and in particular by their use of loudspeakers. The citizen, who thus finds himself elevated to the moral judgment seat, is by implication defined as a person who seeks nothing but his livelihood, his harmless private enjoyments, his privacy, and his rest. That he may also be concerned in some manner with the public good is not apparent from the demand that he shall be left in peace instead of being subjected to the infernal din set up by the fascist speakers, and by their "riotous" opponents. Among these opponents the Jews are scolded for trying to mob the fascists whenever they see a chance, and the Communists for disguising their real purpose behind a cynical show of concern for democracy and Jewish rights. From there it is not a great step to "a plague on both their houses," and the step is in fact taken so far as the Communists are concerned, while the Jews are advised to concentrate on quiet propaganda among their more reasonable and respectable Gentile neighbours. Finally, the authorities are urged to ban the use of loudspeakers as an invasion of the privacy of the home. That, more or less, is what the advice given by Rebecca West to her fellow citizens in the year 1947 amounts to. The remainder of her series of articles is concerned with refutation of the usual anti-Jewish libels current among the Gentile population and has no direct relevance to the problem of fascist disintegration in a liberal democracy.

Throughout, Miss West's analysis rests on the unproved and—in the present writer's view—groundless assumption that the average citizen only has to have the truth pointed out to him in order to become aware that it *is* the truth and to proceed to cold-shoulder the small minority of pathological anti-Semites, and the handful of fascist crooks and gangsters. Fascists who, openly or by implication, incite audiences to follow the Nazi example, and Jews who indulge in abusive and frequently stupid and ineffective heckling fall alike under Miss West's displeasure, and no doubt under the displeasure of the liberal-conservative upper class she represents.

As the (American) author of a letter of protest to the *New Statesman* (October 25) pungently remarked, the murderer and the corpse are equally blamed, in strict accordance with upper-class canons of taste, by which the good is equated with the genteel, the evil with the vulgar. Right and wrong

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no longer exist. Neither, it appears, do Right and Left. The call goes out to all good citizens, of whatever class, sect, or creed, to become even better citizens by keeping their tempers and preserving their sense of fairness, and the responsibility is placed squarely where it does *not* belong: on the stresses felt by *all* groups in society because of the war and its consequences. "For," Miss West writes, "are not Jews showing a failure to realize the fears felt by Gentiles? The Gentiles also are overwrought, because they have also been subjected to an unprecedented strain. They suffered unemployment and apprehension in the world which Hitler and Mussolini were tearing to pieces during the 'thirties. . . . Now the war is over we have emerged all alike exhausted into a world which threatens us with increasing disorganization. . . . Can it be that the Jews really think the Gentiles feel secure? I believe they do hold that monstrous delusion. . . . *We have all been persecuted by the powers of darkness,* we are all of us afraid of the future, and those people who fear it most, because they have no gifts with which to fight for their lives, are huddling together into Fascist groups. . . . "

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that the words "we have all been persecuted" reveal a remarkable failure to understand what the six million dead have meant for the Jewish consciousness in the modern world. One's suspicion that the sensibility which permits such writing is not adequate to its subject matter is borne out by close reading of these widely circulated articles, which try to formulate a "sane" attitude on the Jewish question, more or less on these lines: "If you dislike your Jewish neighbour, dislike him then, but keep quiet about it, and remember that your feeling for him is probably irrational and ill-grounded." It would be difficult to imagine anything less likely to stir the average citizen into a realization of what is really at stake. That is not to say that this type of enlightenment is not useful within strict limits. The trouble is that it is of little value in the area in which social conflict actually takes place today.

Britain has emerged weakened and impoverished from a war conducted under Conservative leadership, in the course of which a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, by heavy taxes on the larger incomes, inaugurated the social revolution now being completed by the Labor government. This fact explains both the current dissatisfaction of the British middle class and its restlessness under a social and political regime which promises no early alleviation of the new economic burdens. Like the Labor government's attitude towards its working-class supporters, the Conservatives' attitude towards the middle class reflects the realization that greater sacrifices are demanded from all groups of society. As the *Economist* of October 18 put it with characteristic bluntness: ". . . what is happening is not the crisis of a single party or a single creed . . . but the crisis of a whole political and social system . . . the crisis of a whole nation which has to shake itself out of habits of sloth. . . . " This, and not the nationalization of the coal industry, is the really revolutionary change brought about by the history of the last five or six years. Since at the moment it is the middle classes who are feeling the pressure most keenly—the workers still being cushioned against the shock by full employment, relatively high wages, and extended social insurance benefits—it is not surprising that their temper has become markedly less tolerant and complacent than it was during the inter-war years.

The difficulty from the point of view of the political leaders lies in the fact that it is impossible simultaneously to apply a soporific and to call forth the unprecedented efforts demanded by the new situation. The attempt to do both, by alternately stressing the urgency of social renovation and the need for national unity, has already failed either to reconcile the middle class to the Labor government or to stimulate the productivity of the workers, and will continue to fail.

The government's notorious inability to dramatize the social changes it is carrying out, or is supposed to be carrying out, is due not to Mr. Attlee's personal talent for "de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hydrating every issue except that of banknotes," to quote the sour quip of the *Economist*. It is due to something more fundamental: Fabian socialism is too genteel to strike the imagination of the workers, and not sufficiently tough to deal with the problem of planning under conditions of full employment. Its half-way house offers a comfortable abode for large numbers of well-meaning and civilized people, but it has failed to provide the driving power of which society has been to a large extent deprived by the paralysis of the market economy. Hence the resurgent cry for a return to liberalism, and simultaneously the growth of frankly authoritarian tendencies. (The Conservative party's "Industrial Charter" attempts to steer a middle course by presenting a vague sketch of something called "self-government in industry" which in practice would probably add up to a watered-down version of the corporate state.)

All this constitutes a dilemma for the type of political leader—still overwhelmingly predominant—who is wedded to democracy of the liberal type, whatever his party politics. At bottom it is felt by all who take an active share in public life that Britain requires a new social integration. Since it is not practical politics to say so out loud, there is a good deal of misplaced emphasis on so-called moral values, apostrophized by liberals in abstraction from their social function, and identified by Catholics and other Christian conservatives with the maintenance of traditional home and family life. At the same time, there is no concealing the fact that the social stability that permits such hortatory eloquence to be expended from the pulpit, the press, and the public platform, is gravely deficient by prewar standards, though greatly superior to its equivalent across the Channel and in Continental Europe generally.

The blunt fact is that Britain is entering upon the sort of crisis—economic, social, political, and "moral"—which typically precedes a violent attempt at reintegration on anti-liberal lines; which is not to say that Britain is "going fascist" or is in any immediate danger of doing so. Indeed, it is possible, perhaps probable, that other influences will assert themselves before it is too late; before, that is to say, the present disintegration has gone so far as to make the operation of liberal democracy impossible. There is, however, no guarantee that a substantial part of the lower middle class will not be drawn towards a "nationalized" form of fascism.

If this is happening, it is unlikely that enlightening propaganda of the type represented by the Rebecca West articles will have the smallest effect on any but those already immune to fascist influence. The reason is that the "decent citizen," a slightly idealized version of the *homo oeconomicus*, and, like the latter, one or two dimensions short of full reality, is not the bulwark of order his admirers take him for. At best he is the man who pays his taxes and gives no trouble; at worst he is liable to be stampeded by imaginary threats to his security. As a symbol of the new integration which Britain urgently requires he is utterly useless. Moreover, there is real ground for doubting whether his numbers are as large as his apologists are in the habit of assuming. It may well be that he is already in a minority.

What is disturbing about the readiness of contemporary writers of Rebecca West's standing to lean upon this broken reed is the failure to perceive that the national cult of decency, fairness, and tolerance becomes meaningless if these desirable qualities are conceived as canons of behavior or moral abstractions divorced from the totality of a way of life which alone can sustain them in difficult times. Before the war, and indeed throughout the whole of the past century, they represented a whole corpus of social habits which differentiated life in Britain from the harsher reality of the Continent. Even today this remains true when they are measured against what the average man has come to know of Germany, and vaguely suspects of Eastern Europe.

The humanitarian upsurge is still strong: witness the new sensitiveness to matters of child education, the problems of the aged

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the sick, and the treatment of criminals. Nevertheless there is a tendency for this interest in the weaker members of society to be associated with an attitude which is not far removed from Munichism, that refuses to bear responsibility for those beyond the charmed circle of one's own culture, and an insistence upon the desirability of cultivating one's garden and ignoring the follies of the outside world. Conversely, those who still think of Britain in "imperial" terms are tempted to an aggressiveness of which their predecessors were normally free. It is through this gap between its imperial and its liberal traditions that the self-confidence of the British ruling class has partly leaked away.

Will this drain continue, and will it weaken the resistance of Britain to political maladies of the Continental type? The answer depends to some extent on the success of the intelligentsia in creating new models of social behavior. Britain is in the fortunate position of possessing both a governing class with liberal-democratic traditions of rule and a working class with ripe political experience. Compared with most Continental countries, its social cohesion is high: violence is still almost unknown and unscrupulousness is not widespread. Nevertheless there are danger signs.

No society can for long extol a mere negative—the absence of totalitarianism—as an ideal without suffering some diminution in moral and intellectual stature. Pre-war Britain was conscious (not always on sufficient grounds) of being a better place than any Continental country, and it was this conviction which really underpinned the national cult of tolerance and the stability of the "decent citizen." In order to become model citizens of the new world order, Britons will have to solve the pressing problems of their country, and nothing is of less use to them in this task than an abstract glorification of various secondary traits of the national character. Indeed, the new mood of national self-consciousness is probably having harmful effects all around.

If the Labor party had succeeded—alas, it has hardly tried—in presenting a new type of Briton to the world, cabinet ministers and editorial writers could have saved themselves their feeble bluster. No doubt a new élite is forming. The new type of British national who is not just a "decent citizen" in search of peace and quiet, but an active inhabitant of the modern socialized world, probably exists somewhere, but he is not being given a chance to remake his country in his image and to represent it worthily abroad. Least of all is his existence suspected by writers belonging to an upper class which is indeed "exhausted," not because it has been "persecuted," but because it has shot its bolt.

British Conservatives are entitled to take credit for their refusal to capitulate to Hitler, and for their willingness to fight him at all risk, but it is time their compatriots realized that even the gentleman has had his day.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FRANCE: IS DE GAULLE FASCIST?

The Nature of His Threat to the Fourth Republic

SHERRY MANGAN

PARIS

ON THE morrow of the recent French municipal elections, an arrogant and impatient voice was heard in France. It declared peremptorily: "The present National Assembly must be dissolved as soon as possible. . . ." And added threateningly: "Events are too menacing to permit any delay. . . . Those who, having the authority to adopt the necessary measures for transition, avoid taking them . . . in order to prolong the present ill-fated regime will incur literally crushing responsibilities."

Stepping into the limelight at a press conference some weeks later, the voice's owner, General Charles de Gaulle, made crystal-clear his contempt for the majority of the present elected representatives of the French people: "The wave is launched. . . . I can only be sorry for those who don't want to understand it. If they want to fight against this force, which recalls certain analogous forces that at times during our history . . . have swept away all before them . . . very well, they will be swept away! And if they want to stand on the shore hopelessly wailing . . . their criticisms and curses will no more matter than spitting in the ocean." Adding a few further remarks on the need for dissolving the French Communist party and controlling the trade unions, he stalked off back into his momentary retirement at Colombey-les-Deux-Églises.

People to whom such statements sounded like a nightmare echo of the declarations of Hitler around 1931 and 1932 began to have the jitters. They asked: Is this a new fascist leader? Will he come to power? Does it mean anti-Jewish persecutions in France? And above all, they asked in tones of hurt surprise: How could this happen? How could the man of the 18th June, the gallant liberator of France, change and talk like a man aspiring to be a dictator?

The plain fact of the matter is that there are no grounds for surprise. De Gaulle has not changed any more than, say, Stalin has changed. His present behavior grows logically out of his whole past life, beliefs, and activities. His record has always been there to be looked at by anyone who wanted to take the trouble to do so. If it was not broadly publicized, it is because the Allied press and propaganda services covered it up. The Allied censorship, for instance, mercilessly killed news-cable references to the persecution of non-Gaullist French resistants at 10 Duke Street in Britain.

CHARLES-ANDRÉ-JOSEPH-MARIE DE GAULLE began life as a classic royalist. France, like Germany, has a solid century-old tradition of reactionary mystical nationalism, in which the old parallel nationalist current of liberal-progressive ideas originated by the French Revolution has long since been dissolved. French history has known such wor-

---

BEHIND the shifting French political scene stands the figure of Charles de Gaulle, wartime leader of the Free French and now a serious contender for national power. Here SHERRY MANGAN, who has lived in Paris since his graduation from Harvard in 1925, analyzes the political significance of de Gaulle and his movement, the Rassemblement du Peuple Français. Mr. Mangan has served for over ten years as Paris correspondent for *Time*. He left Paris during the war, when he was expelled by the Nazis from German-occupied Europe. After an assignment in South America, he returned to France and has again taken up his permanent residence there. Mr. Mangan has published experimental poetry and criticism in numerous little magazines, and for a time edited his own review, *Pagany*, which attracted wide attention in the early 1930's. Mr. Mangan was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1904.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thy representatives of this nationalist mystique as the anti-Dreyfusard mobs at the end of the last century, the Camelots du Roi after 1918, the Croix du Feu, who made their bid for power on February 6, 1934, and the Cagoulards, famous for their vicious attacks on Léon Blum. Their direct linear descendants are those "gilded youths" who, after de Gaulle's inflammatory Mont-Valérien speech on June 17, 1946, marched—shouting: "De Gaulle to power! Thorez to the gallows!"—to the headquarters of the French Communist party in the Square de Châteaudun, looted the bookshop, and made a Hitlerian-style bonfire of the books in the street.

By 1931, de Gaulle's original royalism had given place to a more general mystique of "the Leader," and his personal ambition had begun to grow fiercely, as can be seen in his most important piece of writing to that date, a long article titled "On Prestige." This extraordinary and almost unknown piece, which should be read in its entirety for a full understanding of the man's mind, deserves lengthy citation. It begins:

"Our times are hard on authority. Customs break it down, laws tend to weaken it. . . . In the home as in the workshops, in the State as in the street, it arouses impatience and criticism rather than trust and subordination. . . . Such a crisis, general though it appears, can last only a certain time. Men, at bottom, cannot get along without being ruled. . . . These political animals need organization, that is, order and chiefs. If authority is tottering on shaken foundations, the natural equilibrium of things will find others, sooner or later, better or worse, and in any case suited to the establishment of a new discipline. . . . All the credit the masses once accorded to position or birth, they give now only to those who have known how to impose themselves. What legitimate prince was ever obeyed like such-and-such a dictator who has emerged from nothing save his own audacity?"

This is strong language, and had its writer's future been suspected, it would have made a sensation. But buried as it was in the pages of the technical *Revue Militaire Française*, it passed almost unnoticed. De Gaulle himself, however, believed in his star, and it was certainly of his future self that he went on to speak: "The fact is that certain men spread about them . . . a fluid of authority, concerning which it is hard to see of what it consists even while undergoing its effects. . . . "

There follow prescriptions of how the leader should behave—his reserve, silences, personal appearance, daring—which read like the daily newspapers' description of the 1947 de Gaulle. The author assures his readers—and no doubt himself—that real leaders spread about them "a magnetism of confidence and even of illusion. For those who follow them, they personify the goal, incarnate hope. The devotion of little men, concentrated on their person, confuses the success of the enterprise with the joy of satisfying them." They are no saints, in de Gaulle's view, "evangelic perfection does not lead to empire. The man of action is scarcely conceivable without a strong dose of egotism, of pride, of harshness, of trickery. But all this is forgiven him and even makes him stand out in greater relief if he uses it to accomplish great things."

The general conclusions of this remarkable article were that the pendulum would swing back against the excessive democracy of the Third Republic, though he was naturally too prudent to call it by name: "The time is just passing when the cult of money excommunicates all others. The balance of events tends toward equilibrium, and in a clatter of failures, scandals, and prosecutions, brings moral values back into the broad day of public respect."

And who would accomplish this? The armed forces. And behind the armed forces, the still shadowy Leader.

De Gaulle first came to public attention in the troubled year of 1934, when royalist and nationalist reactionary bands rioted bloodily on the Place de la Concorde and forced the resignation of the government. His volume, *Vers l'armée de métier*, though no popular success, aroused great interest in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

high places, and particularly in the mind of Paul Reynaud. Hailed somewhat tardily in 1940 as a brilliant text on the use of armor, its main underlying idea is actually political.

De Gaulle had witnessed the French Army mutinies in 1917, and had fought in Poland in 1919-20 against a mutinying Red Army; both were mass conscript armies. In the France of 1934, when the political tension between Left and Right was reaching a pitch that threatened civil war, and the reliability of citizen levies became a matter of considerable doubt, he conjectured whether it would not be possible to replace mass conscript armies, subject to political beliefs and crises, by a small, powerful professional army swayed only by a leader: "A WEAPON FOR REPRESSIVE AND PREVENTIVE ACTION — that is what we have to provide for ourselves. . . . These professional troops must have nothing to bind them: neither habits, interests, nor family ties. . . . During the calling up of reservists, the distribution of immense quantities of equipment, and the numberless movements and manipulations which these operates involve, the slightest unrest is fraught with danger. . . ."

A section on the leader cult sounds singularly autobiographical. One can easily sense the wistful impatience of the still relatively unnoticed young officer: "Whatever may be the effect on the value of leaders of more liberal training and wider autonomy, the essential thing will remain, as always, the personal hidden efforts of those who aspire to command. . . . Destined to leave their impress rather than to receive one, they build up in the secrecy of their inner life the structure of their feelings, of their ideas, of their will. His faculties, shaped for heroic feats, despise the pliability, the intrigues, and the parade through which the most brilliant careers are achieved in peace time. And so he would be condemned to emasculation or corruption if he lacked the grim impulse of ambition to spur him on. It is not, to be sure, that the passion for rank and honors, which is only careerism, possesses him, but it is, beyond doubt, the hope of playing a great role in great events!" It must have seemed lonely and long to wait, to this strange gangling man, filled with a fire of belief in himself and a gnawing ambition. The time itself seemed unfavorable. But he believed in a reaction and he believed in his star. He went on: "For a thousand reasons, a change must come. . . . A leader will have to appear. . . . For the sword is the axis of the world, and greatness cannot be shared. . . . For glory gives herself only to those who have always dreamed of her."

He did not have as long to wait as he feared. In 1940, in the last shake-up of his cabinet before passing power over to Pétain, Premier Paul Reynaud called on de Gaulle, freshly promoted to general's rank, to assist him in the War Ministry as sub-secretary of state. In little over a month the collapse occurred; de Gaulle, after trying to persuade his old friend and hero Pétain not to sign the armistice, fled to England and broadcast his famous declaration, "France has lost only a battle, it has not lost the war!"; and his chance had come to create that leadership of personal power of which he had dreamed.

IT WAS not smooth going. Soon after arriving in England he announced "that he was taking under his authority all Frenchmen finding themselves in British territory or coming thereto." But the Churchill-de Gaulle agreement signed August 7, 1940, forced him to retreat and limit himself to volunteers. Yet he succeeded in governing single-handed until September 24, 1941; and though at that date the British forced the creation of the Comité National, *de facto* control still remained wholly in his hands.

What was practically more important, his uncontrolled rule had enabled him to set up his own personal political apparatus, which neither British nor American efforts ever succeeded in breaking up—though not for lack of trying. United States support of Darlan and later of Giraud is still disagreeably fresh in everyone's memory. As for Churchill, his sentiments were neatly summed up by his grumbling roar—late one night, over the double Scotches, when news of the General's latest shenanigans were reported to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him—"Of all the crosses I have to bear, the cross of Lorraine is far and away the heaviest."

Here enters the curious figure of Colonel Passy.

The notorious CSAR (Comité Secret d'Action Révolutionnaire, more familiarly known as the "Cagoulards" or "hooded ones"), a band of democracy-baiting, anti-Semitic reactionaries who were responsible for a whole series of political crimes and provocations between 1934 and 1939, prudently divided itself in 1940 into three sections. One section, in Free France, was led by a Dr. Menetrel, with headquarters in the apartment of Pétain, whose personal physician and closest adviser he was. The second section, in the Occupied Zone, created under the leadership of the sinister Joseph Darnand a "security militia" that killed hundreds of people and ruthlessly hunted down Jews and *Résistants* for its Gestapo ally. The third section, hedging against an Allied victory, integrated itself skillfully in the inner circles of the Gaullist Resistance. With a sardonic semi-disregard of concealment, the members of this section took as their *noms de guerre* the names of Paris subway stations and installed themselves in London under the leadership of a former collaborator of the Cagoulard chief, Eugene Deloncle, the brilliant and ruthless Colonel de Wavrin, who now chose as his false name "Colonel Passy."

De Gaulle and Passy set up a sort of Gestapo called the BCRA (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action) under control of the latter, and began a *Gleichschaltung* of all Free French. The French Resistance comprised some eighty-odd different groups and over four hundred clandestine newspapers. Many were anti-Gaullist; most were non-Gaullist; only a very few were actually Gaullist. To knit all these diverse groups together and make them all subservient to himself was an immense task, but de Gaulle's obstinate ambition, Passy's ruthlessness, and the fact that the British, in de Gaulle, had a bear by the tail and dared not let go, made it a far from hopeless one.

De Gaulle and Passy, furthermore, had two very strong trump cards. They had the exclusive use of the BBC French broadcasts, though many of the men working there were secretly anti-Gaullist. And they had the almost exclusive control of all communications with the escape routes from Occupied France. Indeed, it was not until the spring of 1941 that they would even agree to the participation of the British Intelligence Service; and even then a strange sort of underground warfare was carried on in which the British secret agents in France who ran foul of Passy's men had a way of being picked up soon afterwards by the Gestapo. Yet, for fear of public scandal, this sort of war within a war had to be kept secret. Passy's control also enabled him to see that parachuted arms and money went exclusively to his own organizations.

Control of escape routes prevented anyone getting out of France until he had previously signed an undertaking to support de Gaulle. If a non-Gaullist did succeed in reaching England independently, pressure was immediately brought on him to compromise himself in de Gaulle's favor by making a speech over the BBC. If such a man were unwilling to accept Gaullist employ, he became unemployable elsewhere, obtained his identity card and ration tickets with difficulty if at all, and was forced to subsist on the charity of friends. This was the treatment for political moderates with influence.

For humbler or more radical resisters there were the ill-famed cellars of the BCRA headquarters at 10 Duke Street, London, where they were beaten and tortured in the best Gestapo manner. An occasional death was covered up as suicide—including an alleged hanging from a bracket only some four feet off the floor. When the staff physician, Doctor Ségal, finally refused to certify such cases as accidents any further, he was ruthlessly persecuted by Passy. Concentration camps in Great Britain and the French colonies received those who came out of 10 Duke Street alive and still stubborn. When one man named Brunot escaped and attempted to bring his torturers into a British court,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the case was repeatedly postponed. The courageous editor of *Picture Post* and *World Review,* Edward Hulton, revealed as much as the censorship would permit, and was promptly sued for defamation by the French Committee. The suit was pure bluff; fearing exposure, the committee soon dropped it.

RIVALS and potential rivals of de Gaulle, misled by his rather comic and grotesque appearance (one wit accurately described his usual manner as that of a sulky camel), and his almost unbelievable attitude toward himself and his mission, (e.g., the numerous references to himself as Joan of Arc), made the fatal mistake of underestimating him in much the same way that Hitler's rivals underestimated the latter as a comic figure. One after another de Gaulle defeated and discredited his opponents, often by methods more ruthless than honorable, as in the case of Admiral Muselier. Meanwhile Passy's functionaries were patiently building up their *dossiers*—estimated at the moment of transfer from London to Algiers as already more than one hundred thousand—against non-Gaullist Resistants. These *dossiers,* incidentally, have never been found, and are presumably stored away somewhere waiting for the day when the turn of history will enable them to be put to use.

Enough is already known to indicate the frequency of Passy's practice of ridding himself of underground workers who were or became opposed to de Gaulle by seeing that they fell into Gestapo hands or got rubbed out by more "trustworthy" workers. Yet it may be long before all proof is secured. Even when—as the result of an inside political struggle whereby the Socialists got their hands on the BCRA (renamed successively DGSS, DGER, and finally SDECE)—Passy was put under house arrest, charged with defalcations totaling thirty million francs and various crookednesses involving foreign exchange and the illegal exchange of invalidated banknotes, very little came out. Passy denied nothing, but alleged matters of high policy as explanation, and sat tight. De Gaulle was forced formally to disavow him. But nothing particularly disagreeable has happened to him.

WHILE on the military and espionage plane every sort of struggle was going on, between the Free French, Vichy, and among the Free French themselves, on the political plane de Gaulle had no particular quarrel with his old chief Pétain. Speaking at a luncheon in London in 1942 about the semi-fascist measures adopted by Pétain under the demagogic title of the "National Revolution," de Gaulle remarked, "But the national revolution is a very good thing. What I criticize in Pétain is that to impose it on the French people he relied on German bayonets. That's just the way to cause it to fail. . . ."

The British and American reservations towards de Gaulle were based neither upon his politically reactionary position nor upon his personal crankiness, but upon his extreme, uncompromising, and stubborn *nationalism.* Pétain, Laval, and Darlan were almost too much for the Germans, but they could not hold a candle for slipperiness and obstinacy to their opposite number in the Allied camp. De Gaulle was willing to accept all the support the Allies could offer, but he remained determined all during the war to use this help not only to liberate France from the Nazi grip but also to turn it against the Allies themselves in order to prevent them from placing any mortgages on his country—and, even more, on himself.

This ultra-nationalist attitude he carried over into the period of his limited power as provisional president of the new Fourth Republic. He embarked at once on a policy of grandeur and glory. Like many military men of surging ambition, de Gaulle is no economist, and he apparently could not get it through his proud head that World War II had reduced France to the status, not merely of a second-rate, but of a third-rate power. He attempted by the Franco-Soviet Pact (despite his undying and lifelong hatred of Communism) to get into a position to hold some sort of balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

view of France's military and economic impotence, he succeeded only in falling between the two stools.

In the colonies, at the cost of military budgets which have been one of the main causes of France's present bankruptcy, he tried to carry on with an arrogant high hand, and by his short-sighted refusal to accord even the most unpostponable concessions, very nearly succeeded in losing France's colonies for her definitively.

When, disregarding all Allied attempts to hold him back, he landed in France soon after the beginning of the Liberation, he found that he was showered with flowers as a symbol, but, as provisional president, he had in his hands none of the real levers of command. The real power was held by the regional Committees of National Liberation and the FFI-FTP armed bands in the countryside, and by the trade unions and the armed factory guards in the cities—all controlled in turn by the French Communist party. There is considerable reason to believe that the real reason behind the gallant but not otherwise particularly necessary Paris uprising was to get possession of the *mairies*, the arms stocks, the newspaper printing plants, etc., before de Gaulle's forces could enter and do so. The Communists, following at the time the Kremlin policy of avoiding socialist revolution while infiltrating the capitalist state, gradually passed the top power to de Gaulle on a silver platter. In return they exacted concessions which left the aspiring dictator not sole holder of power, but merely one component in a coalition.

The main political parties, the Socialist, the Communist, and the Popular Republican Movement (MRP), had not the faintest intention of surrendering to any man on horseback even if it was a white horse, or to his "strong state." When de Gaulle saw that he would be unable to impose his ideas on the new constitution being prepared by the Constituent Assembly, that the economic situation and the food crisis accompanying it was becoming such an inextricable mess that no government could unscramble it or make headway against it and must necessarily emerge discredited, he decided prudently *reculer pour mieux sauter* (to step back in order to jump farther). Announcing, with a disingenuousness that has few parallels, that everything was fine now and his task safely done, he resigned.

The tactic was judicious. Through the MRP and especially through the Minister of Armed Forces, the General continued to control the officers' corps of the army, his main support. On the other hand, he no longer shared responsibility for the havoc or resentment the three main parliamentary parties were creating. While waiting for a France driven to despair by hunger and inflation to turn to him once more, he could quietly lay his plans for return and snipe in occasional speeches at the parliamentary democracy he hated.

Such, then, is the record of Charles de Gaulle. It would suggest that anyone who was surprised when he first formed his Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF) and called imperiously on parliament to dissolve itself simply hadn't been keeping his eye on the General.

But all this still does not necessarily mean that de Gaulle is a fascist chief of a fascist party. Nor does it answer the questions: Will he now come to power in France? And if so, will he establish a totalitarian régime, complete with anti-Semitism and all the other horrors?

To answer these questions, it is first necessary to review just what fascism is, and, in particular, to distinguish it from classic reaction.

Fascism, we know, is neither an accidental nor a national phenomenon, but the logical last step in a whole historic-economic process such as can occur in any country. Its preconditions are: a deep, violent, and extended economic crisis; a broad radicalization, showing itself as a drive for socialism among the industrial workers and taking more confused and disparate forms among the urban and rural middle classes; a state of confusion and divided counsel among the country's business and financial leaders, with a resultant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tendency to maneuver and vacillate; in the next stage, a deepening of the economic crisis, provoking the industrial workers to inconclusive strikes and other actions whose failure leads them to discouragement and indifference; an extreme ferment among the badly hit middle-classes, sending them pendulum-wise back and forth from Left to Right, looking for some solution, preferably a miraculous one, and ending in their willingness to undertake the most desperate and violent measures; and finally a definite turning away by the middle class from all Leftist and democratic parties because of their hesitant and inconclusive policies. These are the circumstances that permit a fascist party to mushroom into power. All these objective preconditions, save the definitive last one, exist in France today. Yet the subjective factor, the mass fascist party, no more exists than it did in the immediate pre-war period.

THE word fascism, largely as a result of being hysterically employed for the last twelve years as an *omnium-gatherum* term of abuse by the Communists and their friends, is not clearly understood in the United States. It is sharply distinguishable from classic reaction by three characteristics. First, in the period of its rise to power, it depends on a genuine plebeian mass base rather than on police measures from above. Second, its program is radical and pseudo-revolutionary, characterized above all by anti-capitalist, anti-monopolist demagogy. Third, it sets as its goal and carries out as soon as it reaches power the total extirpation of any and all independent labor organizations. To appreciate this last distinction, one need only compare the classic-reactionary dictatorship of Primo de Rivera with the fascist dictatorship of Franco. Under Primo de Rivera, the Spanish Socialist party and its trade-union federation, UGT, were legal, and Largo Caballero, a left-wing socialist, was a Councillor of State. Even under the Czarist police state, unions, the labor press, and cooperatives had a certain degree of liberty.

In the light of these considerations, it is not possible to call the RPF a fascist party. The French people suffered so bloodily and so recently from the impositions of a foreign fascism that even the most despairing members of a ruined middle class are wary of any domestic fascism in open form.

There is no anti-capitalist demagogy in de Gaulle's program; he has no avowed positive economic program. The one positive plank in his platform is nationalist chauvinism. The only other important ones are purely negative: opposition to the free play of parliamentary democracy and to the continued legal existence of the French Communist party. Toward the trade unions, he has the classic-reactionary idea of controlling them rather than the classic-fascist idea of annihilating them, first by private armed bands and then by ruthless exercise of state power. Far from being a mass-supported upstart forcing his plebeian private army and his pseudo-radical solutions upon business and financial leaders who distrust and half-fear him and hesitate to pay the high price he demands for establishing social peace, de Gaulle himself belongs to these ruling circles, and they distrust him only to the extent that he seems to them at times a little too headstrong and impatient.

The real parallel to de Gaulle in Weimar Germany was not the National Socialist Hitler, but the straight nationalist, Hugenberg. His French precursor was not the demagogic, pseudo-revolutonary fascist Doriot of the Parti Populaire Français, but the law-and-order reactionary nationalist, de la Rocque, of the Croix de Feu. In sum, de Gaulle is a classic-reactionary nationalist, surrounded though he is by the mystique of the anti-Nazi Resistance.

This is not to say that there are not plenty of genuine fascists in the RPF. There are; and the future development of that movement may throw them into positions of power, either by a split from the RPF, or by a transformation of the movement and its chief. And as long as there exist, on the one hand, all the objective conditions for the formation and growth of fascism in France, and, on the other, important fascist tend-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

encies within the RPF, it would be hazardous to exclude the possibility of such a transformation.

AT PRESENT many Jews are members of the RPF; and neither de Gaulle nor the movement as a whole shows any overt signs of anti-Semitism. Exaggerated though his nationalism remains, de Gaulle appears finally to have got it through his head that the salvation of France depends primarily on the United States. And the United States would not condone political anti-Semitism in France. Also, the fact that no outstanding French Communist party leader is Jewish has spared France the linking of anti-Communism with anti-Semitism.

But it would be tragic naivety to trust to the good will of one man. The deepening of the economic crisis has already produced among all layers of the French population a dangerously widespread xenophobia, sadly aided by the competition between the Gaullists and the Communists as to who can be the more nationalistic. In the recent strikes, foreigners, especially Spaniards and Poles, were signally persecuted. This situation bodes ill for Jews, especially those recently come to France from East Europe. The broader development of genuinely fascist tendencies within the RPF would produce a parallel development of anti-Semitism; and no one can say to what extent de Gaulle would resist it. If the present outlook is still not bad, the fact remains that optimism must remain somewhat cautious and conditional.

THERE remains the question: Can de Gaulle come to power in the immediate future? Precisely because of the non-fascist nature of de Gaulle and his RPF, his assumption of power would be relatively smooth. He himself has openly stated that under the present Constitution there are "at least two" quite legal methods. In May the National Assembly, having completed eighteen statutory months, can be dissolved by the government after two easily provocable cabinet crises. Or the Assembly and the Council of the Republic can, by two majority votes (in the Assembly, 309 out of 617—for comparison, Blum just missed with 300, Schuman rode in with 412) three months apart, amend the Constitution to permit them to dissolve themselves. A bill based on this decision becomes operative if voted by two-thirds of the Assembly or three-fifths of both houses. If the majorities are less, it goes to referendum—something de Gaulle, like his model, Louis Napoléon, would dearly love. If time presses, the spirit of the Constitution can be circumvented by using the letter of Article Six, which states: "The duration of the powers of each Assembly is determined by law"—i.e., a simple majority vote of the Assembly can terminate it by passing a law to that effect. In any of these variants, de Gaulle would insist on a parallel change in the election laws to replace the present very democratic system of proportional representation by a straight majority system.

The Gaullist threat to French democracy, therefore, is less that of an immediate military *coup d'état*—though that and a resultant civil war are perfectly possibly under circumstances of extreme crisis — than of a steady legal climb to power, modifying the Constitution from its present relatively democratic form into the irresponsible-executive or "strong state" form that the General needs for his personal power—the whole process crowned perhaps by a final little *coup* once the new regime had all the threads of command in hand.

If well advised and not given his hot and hasty head, de Gaulle would doubtless endeavor to move against the Left with such gradualism that it would never be provoked to sharp counter-measures. Trade unions, for instance, would probably not be outlawed, but slowly "controlled," first by backing, say, Jouhaux against Frachon, then by replacing Jouhaux by some even more right-wing leader, and finally by absorbing the unions themselves into the state apparatus. The tactic against the French Communist party would presumably be, though sharper, still of a sufficiently gradualist nature to avoid an open armed clash until the Communists be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came too weak to resist. Once they were out of the way, the General could feel free to turn on the Socialists and finish them off in their turn. And so on.

Could he get away with it? The main obstacle would be the millions of industrial workers by whom he is cordially hated. But they remain, in their vast majority, under the leadership of the French Communist party. And judging from the lamentable spectacle that party's leadership has just offered by its irresponsible strike policy—irresponsible, that is, to the French workers, but all too responsible to Moscow—it seems only too likely that the working class would retreat before de Gaulle step by step until, as in 1933 Germany, it would go down without a struggle.

WHAT is of more immediate bearing on de Gaulle's chances is the attitude of business and financial leaders of France and of governmental policy-makers in the United States.

Immediately after the municipal elections, with their further polarization of the political extremes, it was fashionable to write off the "third force," or Center coalition of the Socialists, MRP, and the non-Gaullist Right, as an impotent stop-gap. So it is, in historical terms—but not necessarily in the immediate future. It has passed its first test of strength, the November-December strike wave, with flying colors. If it flunks the next test, that of restoring France's shattered economic balance, it still can be asked whether any strong man *à la* Hitler could do better. It should not be forgotten that Hitler at his accession to power had a powerful and unimpaired industrial machine at his disposal; all he had to do was give it a task, and for that he needed only to smash all labor organizations and launch into production for war. France, on the contrary, has a wrecked and worn-out industrial plant, coal and manpower ceilings on production that are difficult if not impossible to break through, a hopeless foreign-trade deficit, an unbalanceable budget, and an inflation curable only by measures of such drastic nature that it is doubtful if any conservative government would dare undertake them. It is not strong-man brutalities but Marshall Plan dollars that alone can keep France's economy creaking along.

From the viewpoint of internal social peace, a de Gaulle is indicated only as a last resort. His accession to power would seem a provocation to labor and would throw into opposition even those workingmen who follow Blum and Jouhaux. His strong-arm methods, if he were too hasty, could well provoke such violent reactions as to lead to the gravest social disorders, and even civil war. And from the American viewpoint, de Gaulle's ultra-nationalism and stiff-necked determination to play an independent rôle would make him far less easy to collaborate with than the more pliant politicians of the present coalition.

Hence it would seem safe to predict that the men who determine policy in both France and the United States will continue—barring unforeseeable and spectacular events—to support the present Left-Center coalition, while holding de Gaulle in reserve for a grave crisis where his special strong-man talents would seem indicated. In any case, de Gaulle himself is unlikely to make his real bid for power until the putting into operation of the Marshall Plan permits him to back up his ringing but somewhat empty words with some solid improvement in the economic situation. By May, his prospects should be much clearer than in this grim winter of discontent.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NIETZSCHE IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN EXPERIENCE

THOMAS MANN

WHEN at the beginning of the year 1889 the news began to spread from Turin and Basel of Nietzsche's mental breakdown, many of those, scattered throughout Europe, who already possessed a measure of understanding of the fateful greatness of this man may have repeated to themselves Ophelia's lamentation: "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!"

And of the characterizations contained in the verses following this, which mourn the terrible misfortune that so lofty an intellect, "blasted by ecstasy," should now ring dissonant like bells out of tune, many fit Nietzsche exactly—not least among them the words in which the grieving heroine epitomizes her praise: "The observ'd of all observers." We ourselves would use the word "fascinating" instead, and, indeed, in all world literature and the history of the human mind, we would seek in vain a personality more fascinating than that of the hermit of Sils Maria. Yet it is a fascination closely related to the one which radiates across the centuries from that great character created by Shakespeare, the melancholy prince of Denmark.

Nietzsche, the thinker and writer, "the mould of form," as Ophelia would call him, was a personality of phenomenal cultural richness and complexity, summing up all that is essentially European, a personality that had absorbed much from the past, a past which—in more or less conscious imitation and continuation—it recalled, repeated, and made again present in a mythical way; and I have no doubt that the great lover of masquerade was well aware of the Hamlet-like trait in the tragic drama of life he presented —I am tempted to say: enacted.

As far as I, the emotionally absorbed reader and "observer" of the generation after, am concerned, I sensed this relationship early and at the same time I experienced a mixture of feelings that contained, especially for a youthful heart, something very novel, exciting, and engrossing: the mixture of veneration and pity. I have never ceased to experience it. It is tragic pity for an overloaded, overcharged soul that was only called to knowledge, not really born to it, and, like Hamlet, was destroyed by it; for a sensitive, fine, and good soul that needed love and inclined toward noble friendship, that was never meant for loneliness and yet was condemned to just that: the most profound, most frigid loneliness, the loneliness of the criminal; for a spirituality at first deeply pious, entirely destined for reverence and bound to religious tradition, which fate dragged, practically by the hair, into the wild and drunken role of a prophet of barbarically resplendent force, of a hardened conscience, of evil, a role devoid of all piety and raging against the prophet's own very nature.

NIETZSCHE was one of the most, if not the most, influential philosopher since Hegel. Enough history has been made by now to justify an assessment of his thinking by facing it with the consequences it has produced. Often enough, Nietzsche has been called the philosopher of the Nazis and Fascists, but it is not sufficiently recognized that he has had a tremendous influence on almost all modern thought, in the anti-fascist as well as fascist camp. THOMAS MANN has made no secret of his own great debt to Nietzsche, yet this does not prevent him from here drawing up a balance sheet in which Nietzsche's liabilities are no less revealed than his assets. It is only by doing this that what is valuable in Nietzsche's thought can be salvaged for us—and such a salvaging is very necessary lest we lose, simply because of certain fallacies entangled in them, the great lessons in thinking and feeling this sick genius still has to offer. Thomas Mann, perhaps the greatest living novelist, now resides in Southern California, to which he returned this fall after a first postwar trip to Europe. His latest novel, an eight-hundred-page work on the life of a German composer in our times, *Doktor Faustus*, has just been published in German in Sweden and is scheduled for publication in English in the fall of 1948.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is necessary to take a look at the origins of this mind, to investigate the influences at work in the formation of this personality —influences that worked without the man's nature having ever resented them as the least bit uncongenial—in order to realize the implausible adventurousness of his life's course, its complete unpredictability.

Born amid the rusticity of Central Germany in 1844, four years before the attempt at a bourgeois German revolution, Nietzsche stemmed on both his mother's and father's side from respectable ministers' families. Ironically enough, there is in existence a paper written by his grandfather on "The Eternal Duration of Christianity: a Reassurance During the Present Unrest." His father was something like a courtier, tutor of Prussian princesses, and owed his parish to the patronage of Frederick William IV. Thus a taste for aristocratic forms, moral strictness, a sense of honor, and punctilious love of order were all native to his parents' home.

After the early death of his father the boy lived in Naumburg, that piously churchgoing and royalist city of civil servants. He is described as "phenomenally well-behaved," a confirmed prig, serious in a well-bred way and with a pious solemnity that got him the name of "the little pastor." Well-known is a characteristic anecdote telling how, during a cloudburst, he walked home from school with measured and dignified steps—because school regulations made proper deportment in the street obligatory for children. He finished his high-school education brilliantly under the famous monastic discipline at Schulpforta. He was inclined toward theology, and also toward music, but then decided on classical philology and studied that subject in Leipzig under a strict methodologist named Ritschl. He succeeded so well that no sooner had he completed his compulsory military service as an artilleryman than he was called, still practically an adolescent, to an academic chair, and this in the serious and pious, patricianly governed city of Basel.

One gets the impression of a highly gifted and noble normality that assured him, apparently, an impeccable and eminent career. Instead of that, what a drifting into trackless wastes! How he went astray on mortal heights! The expression "to go astray" has now become a moral and spiritual judgment, but it originated in explorer's language and was used to describe the situation of the traveler who has lost all sense of direction in an uncharted region. It sounds like philistinism to apply this expression to a man who was most certainly not only the greatest philosopher of the late 19th century, but also one of the most fearless of all heroes in the realm of thought. But Jakob Burckhardt, whom Nietzsche looked up to as to a father, was no philistine, and yet he early detected in the mental outlook of his younger friend an inclination—nay more, a determination—to strike out on dangerous paths and go mortally astray. Wisely, Burckhardt separated himself from him, dropped him with a certain indifference that was really self-preservation of the kind we see in Goethe, too. . . .

What was it that drove Nietzsche into uncharted heights, that whipped him upward under torments, and made him die a martyr's death upon the cross of thought? It was his fate—and that fate was his genius. But this genuis has still another name. That name is: sickness—which word is to be understood, not in the vague and general sense that makes it so easy to associate with the notion of genius, but in such a specific and clinical application that, once again, one has to risk being suspected of narrow-mindedness and reproached for attempting to depreciate the creative life-work of a spirit which, as verbal artist, thinker, and psychologist, changed the entire atmosphere of its time. But that suspicion would be a misunderstanding. It has been said often, and I say it again: sickness is something purely schematic. What is important is that to which it is joined, that in which it fulfills itself. What is important is *who* is sick: an ordinary blockhead, in whose case the sickness would, of course, be without any spiritual or cultural meaning, or a Nietzsche, a Dostoevsky. The medical and pathological aspect is *one* aspect of the truth, its naturalistic one so to speak, and anyone devoted to the truth as a whole, and determined to honor it unconditionally, will never let intellectual prudery make him deny any point of view from which it can be seen.

Moebius, a physician, has been widely criticized for writing a book in which, from a specialist's viewpoint, he presented the story of Nietzsche's development as the story of a progressive paralysis. I have never been able to participate in the indignation over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this. In his own way, this man tells nothing but the irrefutable truth.

In the year 1865, at the age of 21, Nietzsche told his friend and fellow-student Paul Deussen, later a famous Sanskrit and Vedanta scholar, a curious story. The young man had gone alone on an excursion to Cologne and there hired a public porter to show him the sights of the city. They went around all afternoon, and finally, toward evening, Nietzsche asked his guide to show him a decent restaurant. This fellow—who has in my eyes taken on the guise of a very sinister emissary—conducted him, however, to a house of prostitution. The youth, pure as a maiden, all spirit, all learning, all pious diffidence, suddenly found himself, so he says, surrounded by half a dozen apparitions in spangles and gauze who looked at him expectantly. Straight through their midst, the young musician, philologist, and admirer of Schopenhauer walked, instinctively going to a piano he spied in the back of the fiendish salon and in which he saw (these are his words) "the only being in the company with a soul"; and he struck a few bars. This snapped the spell he was under, the petrification, and he regained the open, he was able to flee.

The next day he must surely have laughed when he told his friends of this experience. He was not conscious of the impression it had made on him. Yet it was nothing more and nothing less than what psychologists call a *trauma,* a shock whose increasing aftereffects, never thereafter abandoning his fantasy, testified to the susceptibility of the saint to sin. In the fourth part of *Zarathustra,* written twenty years later, an orientalizing poem is to be found, in the chapter "'Among the Daughters of the Desert," whose shocking facetiousness reveals, with excruciatingly bad taste, a mortified sensuality whose inhibitions were already crumbling. In this poem about "dearest little lady friends and girl-cats, Dudu and Zuleika," an erotic daydream whose humor is painful, the "fluttering and spangled skirts" of those professional ladies of Cologne are again present—still present. The "apparitions in spangles and gauze" of those days evidently served as models for the delectable daughters of the desert; and it is not far from them—only four years—to the Basel clinic where the patient stated for the record that in previous years he had twice contracted a specific infection. The Jena case history gives the year 1866 for the first of these mishaps. Thus, one year after he fled from that house in Cologne, he had returned, this time without diabolic guidance, to a similar place and there contracted—some say deliberately, as self-punishment—that which was to sap, but also enormously to intensify, his life—even more, that which was to stimulate and irritate, in part for good, in part for evil, an entire epoch.

WHAT made him after a few years yearn to leave his academic position in Basel was a mixture of growing ill-health and a craving for liberty, both of which were fundamentally the same thing. The youthful admirer of Richard Wagner and Schopenhauer had at an early age proclaimed art and philosophy to be the true guides of life—in opposition to history, of which philology, his own special subject, was a part. He turned away from the latter, got himself pensioned off on the score of illness, and from then on lived without any ties in cosmopolitan spots in Italy, Southern France, and the Swiss Alps. There he wrote his books, dazzling in style, glittering with bold insults against his age, increasingly radical in psychology, and gleaming with an ever more intense white-hot light. In his correspondence he calls himself "a person who desires nothing more than to lose some comforting belief each day that passes, who seeks and finds his happiness in a liberation of the spirit that increases daily. It may be that I *want* to be even more of a free spirit than I am *able* to be!" This is a confession that was made very early, as early as 1876; it is an anticipation of his fate, of his breakdown; the prescience of a man who was to be driven to take upon himself knowledge more cruel than his mind could stand and who was to offer the world the spectacle of a deeply moving self-crucifixion.

He might well have written under his life's work, as did a famous painter: *"In doloribus pinxi."* He would have been speaking the truth in more than one sense, in a spiritual as well as a physical one. In 1880 he confesses to a physician, Dr. Eiser: "My existence is a terrible burden: I would have thrown it off long ago, were it not that it is precisely in this state of suffering and of almost absolute abnegation that I make the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most instructive of all investigations and experiments in the spiritual and ethical field. . . . Continuous pain, for several hours of the day a feeling closely akin to seasickness, a partial paralysis during which I have difficulty speaking, and, for a change, furious attacks (the last one forced me to vomit for three days and three nights—I longed for death). . . . If I could only describe to you the *continuousness* of this sensation, the constant pain and pressure in my head, on my eyes, and that total feeling as though I were paralyzed from head to foot! . . . "

It is hard to understand his seemingly complete ignorance—and that of his physicians on top of it!—of the nature and source of these sufferings. Gradually the fact that they came from his brain became a certainty, and he thought himself victim of a hereditary affliction: his father, he observes, perished from "softening of the brain"—which was certainly not true. Pastor Nietzsche died as the result of a mere accident, from a brain injury caused by a fall. Nietzsche's total ignorance of the origin of his illness, or his dissimulation of its knowledge, can be explained only by the fact that the illness itself was entwined and connected with his genius, that the latter unfolded along with it—and that for a psychologist of genius *everything* can become the object of merciless knowledge—save only his own genius.

His own genius was the object, rather, of astounded admiration, exultant self-confidence, crass *hybris*. In all naivety Nietzsche glorified the ecstatic reverse side of his sufferings, those euphoric indemnifications and over-compensations that all belonged to the picture. He does this most magnificently in that almost completely uninhibited late work *Ecce Homo*—there where he praises the fabulously uplifted physical and mental state in which, in such an incredibly short time, he created his Zarathustra poem. This particular page is a masterpiece of style, a genuine verbal *tour de force,* comparable only to passages like the magnificent analysis of the *Meistersinger* prelude in *Beyond Good and Evil* and the Dionysian picture of the cosmos at the end of *The Will To Power*. "Does anybody," he asks in *Ecce Homo,* "at the end of the 19th century have any notion of what the poets of *strong* epochs called inspiration? If not I'll describe it." And then he launches into a description of revelations, ecstasies, elevations, whisperings, divine sensations of force and power, that he cannot but look upon as something atavistic, a demoniac throw-back belonging to other, "stronger" stages of human existence that were closer to God, beyond the psychic possibilities of our own weakling and rational age. And yet "in truth"—but what is truth: the experience itself, or medical science?—all he describes is the deleterious state of over-stimulation that mockingly precedes paralytic collapse.

Everybody will admit that it is a hysterical exaggeration of self-esteem, an exaggeration that reveals his slipping reason, when Nietzsche calls his *Zarathustra* an achievement compared to which all other human accomplishments seem poor and limited, when he claims that a Goethe, a Shakespeare, a Dante would never have been able to draw breath for even a moment on the heights of this book, and that the genius and the goodness of all great souls put together would never have been capable of producing one of Zarathustra's orations. Of course it must be a great pleasure to write down things like this, but I find them impermissible.

And then again it may be that I am only confirming my own limitations when I go on to confess that for me Nietzsche's relation to his Zarathustra work seems in any case to be one of blind overestimation. Because of its biblical flavor, it has become the most "popular" of his books, but it is not his best one by far. Nietzsche was above all a great critic and philosopher of civilization, a European prose writer and essayist of the highest rank, who came out of Schopenhauer's school; his genius reached its peak at the time of *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*. Many a poet may amount to less than such a critic, but it was this very lesserness that Nietzsche lacked, except in certain admirable lyrical moments that never sufficed for an extensive work of creative imagination. This faceless and formless monster, this tall, stately Zarathustra, with a rose crown of laughter on his unrecognizable head, with his "Grow hard!" and his dancer's legs, is no creation; he is rhetoric, agitated verbal wit, tortured voice and dubious prophecy, a phantom of helpless *grandezza,* affecting at times but most often painful to watch—a monstrosity bordering on the ridiculous.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When I say this, I remember the desperate cruelty with which Nietzsche spoke about many, really about *all* the things he revered: about Wagner, about music in general, about morals, about Christianity—I nearly said: also about all things German—and how even in his most furiously critical outbreaks against these values and forces, which deep within his innermost self he respected, he never, obviously, had the feeling of really doing them harm, but seemed to feel rather that the most awful insults he hurled at them were a form of homage. He said such things about Wagner that we cannot believe our eyes when suddenly we find him talking in *Ecce Homo* about the "holy hour" in which Richard Wagner died in Venice. How is it, we ask with tears in our eyes, that this hour of death all of a sudden became "holy," if Wagner was the appalling ham-actor, the debauched debaucher, Nietzsche a hundred times described him as?

He excused himself to his friend, the musician Peter Gaest, for his constant preoccupation with Christianity: really it was, he claimed, the best piece of idealistic life he had ever known. After all, he said, he was descended from generations of Christian ministers and did not think that he had "ever in his heart vilified Christianity." No, but in a hysterical voice he had called it "the one immortal stain of dishonor upon humanity"—not without making fun at the same time of the contention that the primitive German had in some way or other been pre-formed or predestined for Christianity: that lazy but warlike and rapacious bear-skin-loafer, that sensuously cold lover of the hunt, that beer-drinker who had barely progressed as far as a halfway decent red Indian's religion, and who no more than ten hundred years ago had slaughtered human beings on sacrificial stones—what affinity could he have had for the highest type of moral subtlety, sharpened as it was by rabbinical intellect, what affinity for the Oriental refinement of Christianity! His allocation of judgments is clear and amusing. To his autobiography, "Antichrist" gives the most Christian of all titles: *Ecce Homo*. And the last scribblings of insanity are signed "The Crucified."

One can say that Nietzsche's relation to his favorite objects of criticism was fundamentally that of passion: it was a passion basically without a definite denomination, since the negative constantly changed over into the positive. Shortly before the end of his intellectual life he wrote a page about *Tristan* that vibrated with enthusiasm. On the other hand, at the time when his devotion to Wagner was at its apparent peak, just before writing his festival address, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, for the public, he had already made remarks about *Lohengrin* to intimate friends in Basel—remarks of such detached perspicacity that they anticipated by one and a half decades the *Case of Wagner*.

There is *no* sharp break in Nietzsche's relation to Wagner, no matter what one may say. The world always likes to see such breaks in the works and lives of great men. It found such a break in Tolstoy, where everything is iron consistency, where everything that came later was already psychologically formed earlier. It found such a break in Wagner himself, in whose development there reigned the same uninterrupted continuity and logic. It was no different with Nietzsche. No matter that his works, largely aphoristic, glitter with a thousand colorful facets, no matter that many superficial contradictions can be shown in him—he was all there from the very beginning, was always the same; and the writings of the youthful professor, his *Thoughts Out of Season*, his *Birth of Tragedy*, his essay "The Philosopher" of 1873, not only contain the seeds of his later doctrine, but this doctrine itself, a *joyful* one in his opinion, is already contained in them, finished and complete. What changes is only the emphasis, which constantly grows more frenetic, the pitch of his voice, which constantly grows shriller, the gestures, which constantly grow more grotesque and terrible. What changes is the way of writing, which, very musical from the beginning, degenerates gradually from the dignified discipline and somewhat old-fashioned restraint of German humanistic tradition into a weirdly mundane and hysterically cheerful super-pamphleteering style that in the end adorns itself with the cap and bells of a cosmic jester.

The completely unified and compact character of Nietzsche's *oeuvre* cannot be stressed enough. Like Schopenhauer, whose disciple he remained even after he had long denied this master, he really spent his whole life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in varying, extending, and driving home one *single* omnipresent thought; this latter, altogether sound in the beginning and undeniably justified in its criticism of the age, fell prey in the course of time to such maenadic brutalization that Nietzsche's story can be called the story of the decline of this thought.

WHAT is this thought?—In order to understand it, we must analyze it right down to its ingredients, right down to its conflicting parts. Listed haphazardly, they are: life, culture, consciousness or cognition, art, nobleness, morality, instinct. The concept of *culture* dominates this complex of ideas. It is posited as almost equal to life itself: culture, that is the nobility of life, and connected with culture as its sources and determining conditions are art and instinct, whilst consciousness and cognition, science, and finally morals, figure as the mortal enemies and destroyers of culture. Morality, as the preserver of truth, kills life, because life rests essentially on appearance, art, deception, perspective, and illusion, and because error is the father of all that lives.

From Schopenhauer he inherited the proposition that "life as image alone, beheld in its purity or reproduced by art, is a meaningful drama," i.e. life can be justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Life is art and appearance, no more, and therefore *wisdom* (as the end of culture and life) stands higher than the *truth* (which is a matter of morality). It is a tragic, ironic kind of wisdom, which by artistic instinct sets limits to science for the sake of culture, and which defends life as the ultimate value in two directions: against the pessimism of those who slander life and uphold the hereafter or Nirvana—and against the optimism of the rationalizers and social reformers prattling about earthly happiness for all and about justice, and preparing the way for the socialist slave uprising. This tragic wisdom, which blesses life in all its falsity, hardness, and cruelty, Nietzsche baptized with the name of Dionysius.

The name of the drunken god first appears in that aesthetic-mystical book of his youth, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music,* in which the Dionysian as an artstic state and mental attitude is opposed to the artistic principle of Apollonian detachment and objectivity, much in the same way that Schiller contrasted the "naive" to the "sentimental" in his famous essay. Here we hear for the first time about the "theoretical man," and a hostile stand is taken against Socrates, the archetype of this theoretical man: against Socrates, the despiser of instinct, the glorifier of consciousness, who taught that only what is conscious can be good, the enemy of Dionysius and the assassin of tragedy. According to Nietzsche, Socrates was the source of a scientific Alexandrine civilization, pale, scholastic, alien to myth, alien to life, a civilization in which optimism and faith in reason reigned supreme; the source, likewise, of practical and theoretical utilitarianism, which, like democracy itself, is a symptom of declining powers and physiological fatigue. The human being of this Socratic, anti-tragical civilization, the theoretical man, pampered as he is by optimistic contemplation, no longer wants to take anything *entirely,* in all the natural cruelty that belongs to things. But, as the young Nietzsche convinced himself, the time of the Socratic man was over. A new generation, heroic, bold, contemptuous of sickly doctrine, was entering upon the stage; a gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit was to be perceived in the contemporary world, the world of 1870; out of the Dionysian depths of the German spirit, of German music, of German philosophy, tragedy was being reborn.

LATER he despairingly made fun of his one-time faith in the German spirit, and of everything he had read into it—namely, himself. He himself, in fact, was already completely contained in this as yet mild and humane, still romantically colored prelude to his philosophy. And his world perspective, his glance at the total picture of Western civilization, was already there, too, even though he was then primarily concerned with the German culture in whose high mission he believed, but which he saw in the gravest danger of betraying this mission through Bismarck's establishment of a power state, through politics, democratic leveling-down, and smug satiety with victory. His brilliant diatribe against the theologian David Strauss' senile and cheerful book, *The Old and the New Faith,* is the most immediate example of this criticism of a philistinism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of saturation, which was threatening to rob the German spirit of all its depth. And there is something deeply moving in the way the young thinker at this point already sends prophetic glances ahead to his own fate, which seems to lie before him like a tragic map. I refer to the passage in which he mocks at the ethical cowardice of Strauss, that vulgar enlightener who, he says, takes good care not to deduce any *moral precepts for life* from his own Darwinism, from the *bellum omnium contra omnes,* and from the superior rights of the strong, but instead contents himself with violent outbursts against preachers and miracles in which he always has the philistines on his side. He himself—he already knows this deep down inside himself—will do the ultimate, and not even shy away from madness, in order to turn the philistines *against* him.

IT IS in the second of the *Thoughts Out of Season,* entitled "On the Benefit and Harm of History to Life," that that basic thought of his life which I mentioned above is most perfectly pre-formed, even though still clothed in a specific criticism. This admirable essay is fundamentally nothing but one great variation on that passage from *Hamlet* which mentions the "native hue of resolution" that "is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." The title is incorrect insofar as there is hardly any mention of the benefits of history—all the more does he talk, however, of its harm to life, dear, holy, aesthetically justified life.

The 19th century has been called the historical age, and indeed it was the first to create and develop that sense of history of which former civilizations, just *because* they were civilizations—artistically self-contained systems of life—knew little or nothing. Nietzsche goes so far as to speak of a "historical disease" that paralyzes life and its spontaneity. Education—today that means historical education. But the Greeks had known no historical education of any kind, and one would hesitate no doubt to call the Greeks uneducated. History for the sake of pure knowledge, carried on without life itself as its aim and without the counterweight of "plastic giftedness," creative uninhibitedness, is murderous, is death. An historical phenomenon as an object of cognition—is dead.

A scientifically cognized religion, for example, is doomed, is finished. An historically critical treatment of Christianity, Nietzsche says with conservative solicitude, dissolves it into sheer knowledge of Christianity. In examining religion from the point of view of history, he says, "there come to light things that necessarily destroy the reverential mood of illusion in which alone all things that want to live can do so." Only in love, shaded by the illusion of love, does man *create.* History must be treated as a work of art in order to make it contribute creatively to civilization—yet that would run contrary to the analytical and unartistic trend of the times. History banishes our instincts. Educated, or miseducated, by it, man is no longer able to "loosen the reins" and act naively, trusting in the "divine animal."

History always undervalues the becoming and paralyzes action, which must again and again do violence to objects of piety. What history teaches and creates is *justice.* But life does not need justice, it needs injustice, it is essentially unjust. "A great deal of strength is required," Nietzsche says (and it is doubtful whether he credited himself with this strength), "to be able to live and forget to what extent living and being unjust are one." Yet everything depends on forgetting. He wants the unhistorical: the art and power of being able to *forget* and to confine oneself within a limited horizon—a demand more easily made than met, we might add. For we are born with a limited horizon, and to confine ourselves within it artifically is an aesthetic masquerade and a repudiation of destiny out of which it would be hard for anything genuine and worthwhile to come.

But, very beautifully and nobly, Nietzsche wants our gaze to turn away from becoming and direct itself toward that which gives to existence the character of the eternal and permanent, toward art and religion. The enemy is science, for all it sees and knows is history and becoming, nothing permanent, eternal; it hates forgetting as being the death of knowledge and seeks to erase all the limitations of our horizon. But everything that lives needs a protective atmosphere, a mysterious zone of mist, and an enveloping illusion. A life dominated by science is much less life than one dominated, not by knowledge, but by instinct and *mighty hallucinations.* . . .

Today "mighty hallucinations" makes us

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think of Sorel and his book *Sur la violence*, in which proletarian syndicalism and fascism are still one, and the mass myth, regardless of its truth or untruth, is declared to be the indispensable motor of history. We ask ourselves, however, whether it might not be better to preserve respect for reason and truth among the masses and at the same time honor their demand for justice, rather than plant mass myths and let loose upon humanity mobs dominated by "mighty hallucinations." Who does that today and for what purpose? Certainly not for the sake of civilization.

But Nietzsche knows nothing of masses and wants to know nothing of them. "The devil with them," he says, "and statistics too!" He desires and proclaims a time in which one will unhistorically and super-historically wisely refrain from making any sort of interpretive constructions from world processes, or from human history either; in which one will pay no more heed to the masses, but only to great individuals, timeless contemporaries of each other, who carry on their spiritual discourse high above the bustle of history. The goal of humanity, he says, lies not at its end, but in its highest representatives. That is his individualism: an aesthetic cult of the genius and hero that he took from Schopenhauer, together with the insistence that happiness is impossible and a *heroic* life is the only thing worthy and possible for the individual. Transformed by Nietzsche, and taken together with his adulation of the powerful and beautiful life, this resulted in a heroic aestheticism whose protective deity he proclaimed to be Dionysius, the god of tragedy. It is just this Dionysian aestheticism that made the later Nietzsche the greatest critic and psychologist of morality known in the history of the human mind.

He was born to be a psychologist; psychology is his original passion: knowledge and psychology, these are for him fundamentally one and the same passion, and it characterized the entire inner contradictoriness of this great and suffering spirit that he, who valued life far above knowledge, was so completely and hopelessly caught in psychology. He was already a psychologist on the basis of Schopenhauer's finding that the will does not issue from the intellect, but vice versa, that intellect is not primary and dominating, but the will, to which the intellect's relation is purely one of servitude. The intellect as a servile tool of will: that is the fount of all psychology, a psychology of suspiciousness and exposure; and Nietzsche, as spokesman for life, abandoned himself to a psychology of morals, suspecting all "good" urges of originating in bad ones, and proclaiming the "evil" ones to be those that ennoble and exalt life. This is "the transvaluation of all values."

What used to be called Socratism, "the theoretical man," consciousness, the historical sickness, Nietzsche simply called "morality," and "Christian morality" in particular, which was revealed as something completely poisonous, rancorous, and hostile to life. But at this point it should not be forgotten that Nietzsche's criticism of morality was somewhat impersonal in part, something that belonged to his time in general.

The time itself was that around the turn of the century, the time of the first assault of the European intellectuals upon the hypocritical morality of the Victorian bourgeois era; Nietzsche's furious battle against morality fitted into this picture to a certain extent —often indeed with an astounding family resemblance. It is astonishing to note the close affinity of many of Nietzsche's *aperçus* with the contemporaneous and by no means merely frivolous attacks upon morality with which Oscar Wilde, the English aesthete, shocked his public and made it laugh. When Wilde declares: "For, try as we may, we cannot get behind the appearance of things to reality. And the terrible reason may be that there is no reality in things apart from their appearances"; when he speaks of the "truth of masks" and of the "decay of lies," when he exclaims: "To me beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible"; when he calls truth something so personal that two spirits can never honor one and the same truth; when he says: "Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. . . . The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it"; and: "Don't be led astray into the paths of virtue!"—all this might very well stand in Nietzsche's own writings. And one reads in the latter: "Seriousness, that unmistakable sign of a troublesome metabol-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism."—"The lie sanctifies itself and the will to deceive has a clear conscience on its side in art."—"We are basically inclined to maintain that the most incorrect judgments are the ones most indispensable to us."—"It is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than appearance." There is not a single one of these sentences that could not appear in one of Oscar's comedies "and get a laugh in St. James's Theatre." When people wanted to praise Wilde very highly, they compared his plays to Sheridan's *The School for Scandal.* Much of Nietzsche seems to stem from this same school.

OF COURSE to juxtapose Nietzsche to Wilde has something almost sacrilegious about it, for the latter was a dandy, while the German philosopher was something like a saint of immorality. And yet, with his more or less deliberate martyrdom in Reading gaol at his life's end, Wilde's dandyism won a trace of sanctity that would have awakened Nietzsche's entire sympathy. What reconciled him with Socrates was the cup of hemlock, the end, the sacrificial death, and he believed that the impression this made on Greek youth and on Plato could not be overestimated. And his hatred of historical Christianity left the personality of Jesus of Nazareth untouched—again for the sake of the end, for the sake of the cross that he loved in his inmost heart and toward which he himself strode deliberately.

His life was intoxication and suffering—a highly artistic state, in mythological terms the union of Dionysius with the Crucified. Swinging the thyrsus, he ecstatically glorified the strong and beautiful, the amorally triumphant life, and defended it against atrophy at the hands of the intellect—and at the same time he paid homage to suffering as did none other. "The *order of rank* is determined," he says, "by how deeply a man can suffer." These are not the words of an anti-moralist. Nor is there any anti-moralism in it when he writes: "As far as pain and renunciation are concerned, the life of my last years can measure up to that of any ascetic of any age." But he did not write this as a plea for sympathy—rather with pride: "I *want,*" he says, "to have it as hard as any man can possibly have it." He made things hard for himself, hard to the point of sanctity; for Schopenhauer's saint always remained ultimately the highest type for him, and the "heroic life" was the life of the saint.

What defines the saint? That he does not do a single one of all the things he would like to do, and does all the things he does not want to do. That is how Nietzsche lived: "Renouncing everything I revered, renouncing reverence itself. . . . Thou must become master over thyself, master also over thine own virtues." This is the "act of vaulting over oneself" that Novalis mentions somewhere and which, he thinks, is the supreme deed under any circumstances. Now this "act" (a stage-performer's and acrobat's expression) has for Nietzsche nothing at all of exuberant or terpsichorean *expertise.* Anything "terpsichorean" in his attitude is vacillation and disagreeable to an extreme. It is much rather a bloody kind of self-mutilation, self-mortification, moralism. His very concept of truth is ascetic: for to him truth is what hurts, and he would be suspicious of any truth that was pleasant. "Among the powers," he says, "raised up by our morality was truthfulness: which, turning itself against morality in the end, discovers its own teleology, its own *prejudiced* mode of observation. . . ." His "immoralism" is thus the self-cancellation of morality for the sake of truthfulness. But he hints that this is itself a kind of exaggeration and luxuriance of morality by speaking of an inherited wealth of morality that could well afford to squander and throw away a great deal without becoming noticeably impoverished thereby.

ALL this lies behind those atrocities and drunken messages of power, violence, cruelty, and political trickery into which his idea of life as a work of art and his idea of culture as something unreflective and dominated by instinct, so brilliantly degenerate in his later writings. When a Swiss critic, on the *Bund* in Bern, wrote once that Nietzsche was making a plea for the abolition of all decent feelings, the philosopher was completely flabbergasted at being so utterly misunderstood. "Much obliged!" he said scornfully. For he had meant it all very nobly and humanitarianly, in the sense of a higher, deeper, prouder, *more beautiful* humanity, and he had not, so to speak, "meant any harm"—at any rate nothing evil, even if a lot of wickednesses. For everything that has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

depth is wicked; life itself is profoundly wicked—it is not contrived by morality, it knows nothing of "truth," but rests on appearances and artistic lies, it mocks virtue, for its essence is iniquity and exploitation. And, says Nietzsche, there is a pessimism of strength, an intellectual predilection for the hard, horrible, wicked, and problematical in our existence that arises from well-being, from the fullness of existence. This "well-being," this "fullness of existence," the euphoric sick man ascribes to himself and he takes it upon himself to proclaim as most worthy of affirmation those aspects of life which have until now been denied, especially by Christianity. Life above all!—why? He never said.

HE NEVER gave any reason why life should be something worthy of unconditional adoration and of preservation above all else, but declared only that life goes beyond knowledge, *for* with life knowledge destroys itself. Knowledge presupposes life and therefore is interested in it for the sake of self-preservation. It would seem therefore that there must be life in order for there to be something to know. But this logic does not strike us as sufficient to justify his enthusiastic championship of life. If he saw life as the creation of a God, then we would have to respect his piety, even though personally we might find little inducement to fall flat on our faces before the exploded cosmos of modern physics. But instead he sees life as a massive and senseless offspring of the will to power, and it is just its senselessness and colossal immorality that should throw us into raptures. His cry of adoration is not "Hosanna!" but "Evoe!"—though the voice sounds unusually broken and tortured. The cry is supposed to deny that there is anything in man that transcends the biological, anything that does not expend itself completely in its investment in life; to deny also the possibility of detachment from this investment, a critical detachment—which is perhaps what Nietzsche calls "morality" and which will never indeed seriously do harm to dear life (life is much too incorrigible for that) but might nevertheless serve as a gentle corrective and sharpener of the conscience, which is all that Christianity ever did.

"There is no fixed point outside life," says Nietzsche, "from which one may reflect on existence, no superior authority before whom life could be *ashamed* of itself." Really not? One has the feeling that such an authority is present, and if it is not morality, then it is simply the spirit of man, humanity itself as criticism, irony, and liberty, united to the judging word. "Life is subordinate to no judge"? Yet somehow nature and life rise above themselves in man, in him they lose their innocence, they take on *spirit*—and spirit is the self-criticism of life. This humane something within us looks with doubtful sympathy on a "doctrine of the healthy life" which, though in sober days directed only against the sickness of historicity, later degenerated into bacchantic rage against truth, morality, religion, humanenes, and everything else that might serve passably to domesticate ferocious life.

(To be concluded in the next issue)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HOW BASIC IS "BASIC JUDAISM"?

A Comfortable Religion for an Uncomfortable World

IRVING KRISTOL

I

RABBI MILTON STEINBERG'S little book, *Basic Judaism,* is in good part addressed to me, as one of those who "are groping to establish rapport with the Jewish tradition, standing at the synagogue's door 'heart in, head out.'" It is a provocative book, as would be expected from a man who is so able an exponent of the Reconstructionist version of Conservative Judaism, and who writes with such learning and grace. But it provoked in me—along with an appreciation of its virtues—a considerable unease at its often hollow ring. Rabbi Steinberg will hardly regard my positive and negative reactions as presumptuous. After all, the purpose of his book was to set unsynagogued Jews like myself to thinking about the Jewish religion and their relationship to it.

In writing this book, Rabbi Steinberg has tried to be fair and objective in reporting the various differences, creedal and ritual, within the body of Israel. This is what the Orthodox think, this is what the Reformed think, and here is the golden mean of the Conservatives—so runs the argument in many of the chapters. But beneath all these differences, Rabbi Steinberg insists, there is an unbreakable thread of unity, of agreement, that he calls "basic Judaism."

One must confess to some misgivings about the whole concept of a basic Judaism —or of a basic religion of any kind, for that matter. To be sure, Judaism has always been concerned to protect its unity against the conflict of contradictory interpretations; in this, the sense of the precarious position of the community in the Diaspora played its role. The Talmud itself endeavored to ward off the possibility of schism; is it not written: "Whatsoever any earnest scholar will innovate in the future, lo this was already spoken at Sinai"?

The unity in Judaism that Rabbi Steinberg proclaims is a unity of historical fact. A unity of historical accident, one is tempted to say. For it is not a unity that has anything to do with philosophy, world-outlook, or immediate inner experience. There is, of course, a common original text—the Torah—and to a certain extent a common fund of images and memories; but these, while necessary conditions, do not in themselves make

---

MANY think they note a current trend toward religious interest both within the universities and outside. Often this takes the form of a search for personal belief, perhaps more often of intellectual interest in the problems of religion, that is, in theology. The movement, if it is that, has not been as visible in Judaism as it has in the two major Christian traditions, but there are signs of similar stirring. Milton Steinberg's new book *Basic Judaism,* recently published by Harcourt Brace, is in part an effort to answer the needs of these new seekers. We have asked one of the younger writers who has been concerning himself with religious thinking to set down his personal reflections on Rabbi Steinberg's exposition of Judaism for our times. Rabbi Steinberg is among the small handful of American rabbis and Jewish scholars who have given us serious books on Judaism and its modern relevance in the past two decades: they include *The Making of the Modern Jew* (1934), and *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem* (1945). IRVING KRISTOL's exposition of some basic concepts about Jews and Judaism, "The Myth of the Supra-Human Jew," appeared in the September COMMENTARY, and he has written criticism, fiction, and political articles for various magazines. He would be the first to disclaim any "representativeness" for his religious views. He was born in New York City in 1920, graduated from the College of the City of New York in 1940, and was in the Army for two years. He is an assistant editor of COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up a religion; a core of intellectual conviction is equally necessary.

ACTUALLY, all the events that shattered Christendom into the conflicting denominations we know today have had their parallel in Jewish history. The difference is that the oppressive weight of world hostility has restrained the centrifugal impulse created by these events. We may consider this a blessing if we wish. But we must be wary that the search for "basic Judaism" is not merely an escape from intellectual responsibility, from responsibility to one's *beliefs*. It is a fact, however depressing, that there is today no defining *Weltanschauung* in being a Jew—just as there is none in being a Christian—just as there is none in being a man. (And if we tolerate such concepts as basic Judaism, basic Christianity, basic Buddhism, and so on, why should we not settle for basic religion—in which everything is so watered-down and vague that no one's religious sentiments are excluded from participation? No such settlement is possible because it would simply reflect the atrophy of the religious sentiment itself.)

If we are to have a *Weltanschauung*, it has to be constructed—by each man, by each group of thinkers, by each generation. It is a question of picking and choosing from what tradition and the present have to offer, of acceptance, rejection (no matter how discreet), and reconstruction.

The Orthodox might retort that it is indecent to weigh religions in the open, so to speak. There is something unpleasant in this public pinching, scrutinizing, and fingering of beliefs for which one's ancestors—and even one's family, perhaps—have suffered and died. (This sense of propriety must explain, at least in part, the traditional reluctance of Judaism to engage in overt theological controversy.) The only defense for doing so—true if inadequate—is that the ruling self-consciousness of our times spares nothing its dry uncomfortable glare, not even a Judaism bereft of the protective shell of the ghetto.

Contemporary Jewish theology is, in its various branches (including the Orthodox), a more or less self-conscious construction of Judaism, a careful mixture of past and present in the hope that the mixture will turn out to be a true solution. This is especially the case with Rabbi Steinberg's Conservative Judaism; its careful middle-of-the-road tone should not be allowed to obscure its essentially creative purpose. His point of view is an important one by virtue of its great influence on the American Jewish community; it is also important because it is shared to a surprisingly large extent by thinkers whom we would not ordinarily assign to the same category as Rabbi Steinberg. There is a world of difference between the great mystic-philosopher Martin Buber and the urbane rationalist Milton Steinberg; yet it is surprising how much they do have in common when one gets down to points of doctrine.

My primary concern, genuine if possibly selfish, is: what does this kind of contemporary Jewish theology have to offer to people like me? I believe that it does have valuable positive insights to offer, and that they do establish a claim of Judaism upon me; I also feel that what it has to offer is not quite enough. First, I would like to indicate—in a necessarily sketchy manner—what I consider these positive insights to be.

II

THE creedal basis of Judaism is not overt, but implicit. Since Jews have always belonged to Judaism by belonging to a historical people and culture, there was never a pressing need to set forth the faith in logically pure propositions. There are dogmas, but they are not integrated into a hierarchic, syllogistic structure. Judaism is less a religious system than a system of living religiously. As Martin Buber has written: "In the religious life of Judaism primary importance is not given to dogma, but to the remembrance and expectation of a concrete situation: the meeting of God with men. Dogma can only arise where detachment is the prevailing attitude to the concrete, lived moment. . . ." In other words, to use a currently popular term, Judaism is an *existential* religion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What this means is that Judaism thinks in the categories of life—it does not try to adapt life to the categories of thought. The law and the prophets taught the truths of life and not the truths of philosophy; the "religious life" includes all of life, in its full particularity. If we think of religion as an eternally continuing dialogue between man and God (and this is already a Jewish conception), then the language of this dialogue is life—not prayer, meditation, contemplation, ecstasy, good deeds, or anything else but all of life.

All well and good—but how about God? How does Judaism justify its belief in God's existence? There are innumerable procedures of justification, and Jews at one time or another have tried them all: reason and revelation, first cause and final purpose, and so on. But what is striking about these endeavors is the ironic ease with which one can supplant the other as soon as strategy indicates the need for such a move. Judaism believes in God because—well, to begin with, because Judaism has a covenant with God. Does one sign a contract with a non-entity? And if stupid lawyers (mainly *apikorsim* at that) cannot read the handwriting, what does that prove? Judaism has always respected the intellect—up to a point. There is a saying: where there are two Jews there are three opinions. The "proofs" of God by metaphysics, natural reason, science, sophistry, etc., all in the long run cancel each other out, and we are left with a deity whose existence is essentially non-controversial. It all comes down to the fact that Judaism has faith in God, and it accepts a belief in God for the good and sufficient reason that it believes he exists. Is this arguing in a circle? Well then—it is arguing in a circle. (But it is a circle of words, and outside this circle lies life, and man—and God.)

THERE is hardly any such thing as Jewish "apologetics"; the medieval texts of the "golden age" which can claim that title are outside the subsequent channels of study and concern. Apologetics is the science of defending a belief from attack; for the quarrel to be meaningful, both attacker and attacked must have the same criteria of evidence and proof. Christianity, exposed to the influence of Aristotelian philosophy and modern science, was forced to some degree to accept the criteria of practical and theoretical reason. Post-medieval Judaism, in its insularity of the ghetto, was oblivious to both the criteria and the quarrel, and by the time the ghetto was disrupted, theology was already out of season. This may be more historical fortune than essential virtue—but in any case, there it is. Judaism has always insisted upon the salvation of the world rather than the knowledge of things. All modern science and philosophy, having separated man from the world for purposes of pure knowing, is now desperately trying to put them back together again. (All, that is, except the logical positivists with their mincing distaste for "unanswerable questions," who incline to see the life of man as a kind of grammatical misadventure.) Judaism has never left the whole of man's existence to pursue other hares. Man finds religion in his life, he "proves" it with his life—life is a dialogue with God. That is what Pascal must have meant when he wrote on a slip of paper that he always carried near his heart: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob—not the God of the philosophers."

The modern world has suffered much damage by permitting the scientists to appropriate the vocabulary of meaningful and authoritative discourse as their own and only their own. To "analyze," in the scientific sense of the word, is to express a thing as a function of something else. And if a thing cannot be expressed as a function of something else, it simply doesn't "exist" so far as the scientist is concerned. "Love," as we use the word, has no place in the scientific vocabulary (not even, I would insist, in the vocabulary of psychoanalysis), nor does "God"; why that should give everyone—except the scientists!—an inferiority complex with regard to their beliefs in Love and God is one of the wonders of our times. Similarly, science has pre-empted the word "truth" to refer to a valid proposition issuing from a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

previous series of propositions, some of which may refer to experimental procedures. Perhaps we had better choose another word, like "authentic," for those statements of religion, poetry, and sheer human wisdom that were formerly thought to be "true." But then some hard-headed gentleman will quickly rise to point out that these statements are not—true.

GEORGE FOOTE MOORE, the distinguished historian of Judaism, has written: "Jewish monotheism was reached neither by postulating the unity of nature nor by speculation on the unity of Being—the physical or the metaphysical approach of science and philosophy—but by way of the unity of the moral order in the history of the world. . . ." The world is no play of phenomena and noumena, matter and spirit; it is the daily life ready to be made sacrament, prepared for an act of redemption. According to certain rabbinic teachings, the act of Creation was inspired by the souls of the unborn pious, and the world owes its continued existence to these pious men (zaddikim). Abraham was assured by God that at any one time there could be found thirty men his equal in saintliness—without them the world could not endure.

That evil exists is undeniable; that it is often triumphant is equally evident. Yet, as is seen in the Book of Job, the tragic solution is unacceptable in Judaism. Though evil be inexplicable and ineradicable, the end of human activity is positive and constructive. Judaism forbids man to doubt this; in his deepest extremity, the most that a man is permitted to do is to repeat after Job: "I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." In the *Kaddish* prayer, offered up for the souls of the dead, God is praised and death is not so much as mentioned. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis). This goodness was never vitiated by man's ejection from paradise. Adam fell and men learned to know good and evil—but the world did not fall with him.

Whereas for Kierkegaard the love of God was incommensurable with all of reality, for Judaism there is an unbreakable bond between the love of God and the love of all reality. There are few echoes of Christian-Oriental asceticism to be found in Judaism. For a Jew, virtue is a pleasure; even when it is a sacrifice, a great sacrifice, it is a pleasure. There is no place for wanton sensuality, but neither is the human body considered corrupt or degraded. In the old ghettos on a Friday night the pious Jew would perfume himself and comb his hair before he went to prayer, would fervently chant the Song of Songs at the table, and after the Sabbath supper, the best meal of the week, he generally went to bed with his wife. It was right to do this on the Sabbath, because the union of husband and wife gives us the image of the union of God with the *shekhina.* It was also allowed to break the holiness of the Sabbath for the purpose of making marriage arrangements. Thus did Judaism attempt to achieve the old prayer that runs: "O Lord, let me worship thee not only with my good inclination, but also with my evil inclination." By hallowing the earthly, potential evil was transmuted into actual good.

How far is this from the Catholic mind! "The law of divine love knows no mercy. Love truly sacrifices: it desires the death of everything not itself" (Mélanie de la Salette).

THIS contrast between Jewish and Christian attitudes toward the material world comes out strikingly in their different estimations of poverty. Léon Bloy was a Catholic who always stretched Catholic doctrine to its furthermost limit. When a coin is given to a beggar with bad grace, he wrote, the coin "pierces the poor man's hand, falls, pierces the earth, makes holes in the sun, flies over the firmament and compromises the universe." All this happens because poverty is a form of holiness, and must be honored as such. It is a highly poetic view, a transvaluation of values—if only on a verbal level as far as most of Bloy's fellow Catholics are concerned.

Among the Jews it is otherwise. Poverty

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a gift of God, a product of His boundless mercy along with all other human states. But it has no preferential value—the good things of life are too well appreciated. On the contrary, poverty is thoroughly undesirable, like an early death, whether issuing from God's mercy or not. Tevye, the pauper in Sholem Aleichem's stories, puts this succinctly: "With God's help I starved to death —I and my wife and children—three times a day, not counting supper." God's blessings must be accepted, but there is no law against an ironic comment on his dispensation. To be poor among the Jews . . . is to be poor. That and nothing else. If you don't know what that means, Sholem Aleichem will explain it to you: "Among us Jews, poverty has many faces and many aspects. A poor man is an unlucky man, he is a pauper, a beggar, a *schnorrer,* a starveling, a tramp, or a plain failure." He goes on to say that one can surpass poverty by laughing at it, by refusing to be degraded—but that is a matter of human dignity, not supernatural grace.

SINCE Judaism posits "the moral order in the history of the world," it is impossible to separate doctrine from ethic or either from the people that created them. For Judaism, the relationship between the real and the ideal is active, not cognitive. When Hillel was asked to summarize the Torah in one commandment, he replied: "That which is hurtful to thee do not to thy neighbor. This is the whole doctrine. The rest is commentary. Now go forth and learn."

Whereas the Greeks subsumed ethics under the intellect (philosophy), Jewish ethics are subsumed under the working of the will (law). The Fall was the primal failure of will, but man's spiritual and moral nature was unaffected, and his moral responsibility in no way relieved. The freedom of man's will has never been seriously challenged within Jewish thought. On the contrary: not only is man's responsibility for himself assumed, but also his responsibility for his fellow men, and for God himself.

There is no vicarious salvation in Judaism —each man must save his own soul. At the same time, Judaism is directed toward the salvation of the community, for which individual salvation paves the way; on the Day of Atonement, Jews pray for the remission of communal sins as well as private ones. "Separate not thyself from the community," Hillel said, and indeed Jewish eulogies of the joys and virtues of communal life so resemble those of John Dewey, that it will sometimes happen to me in reading one or the other that the images of the New England small village and the East-European ghetto will merge into an incongruous coincidence.

Nor is Judaism ethnocentric. "The righteous of all people have their share in the world to come," is quite another matter than "outside the church there is no salvation." A non-Jew has only the seven commandments of the sons of Noah to perform in order to be eligible for the best the next world has to offer. The Jews, on the other hand, as the "chosen people," have a greater burden of duties and obligations. The Rabbi of Kosnitz, it is reported, used to pray: "And if you will not yet redeem Israel, then redeem at any rate the *goyim.*" There is in this plea a commingled despair and appreciation of the advantages likely to accrue to the Jews if the *goyim* were redeemed. But there is also a pure breath of genuine universalism.

Man is responsible for his own fate, for his community's fate—and for God's fate. The world was created for the sake of those who can exercise the power to choose God; if God is not chosen, his purpose is wrecked. Each instant is filled with all time in so far as the moral act, the act of redemption, is concerned. This is the significance of the Messianic task. Not a blinding angel on a fiery steed come to supersede the world; the world is not to be superseded at all, but to be redeemed, that is, consummated. It is the zaddik, living his moral life in seclusion, unidentifiable, who carries on and defends the Messianic purpose. "Not thine to finish the task, but neither art thou free to exempt thyself from it."

It is from this conception of man's divine responsibility that springs the stubborn hope, the blind optimism, that has been so fre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quently observed (and misinterpreted) in Judaism. In the daily prayer, it states: "Happy are we; how goodly is our portion and how fair is our lot." But to my mind, the classic example of Jewish transcendent hope lies in the Hasidic tale that begins: "It is told: dangerous plots against the Jews were brewing in the emperor's palace. Then Rabbi Shmelke and his disciple Moshe Leib of Sasov set out for Vienna to put an end to such plans. . . ."

III

THESE are, in brief and in part, the insights, indigenous to Judaism, that I find so valuable. Valuable—yet insufficient. There is something lacking in this kind of Judaism—a note that is absent, a key that is never struck, that subverts one's appreciation of the total effect.

It is not an easy thing to designate, this element that is wanting. Perhaps the best way to approach it is to make the statement: as far as most non-Jewish intellectuals are concerned—and for many Jewish intellectuals, too—the greatest and most influential Jewish thinker of the 20th century is Franz Kafka. And Kafka was a great and influential thinker and writer in so far as he was a Jewish heretic; a heretic to whom Judaism offered itself in its full magnificence, but who could not choose to accept it. "What have I in common with Jews?" he asked. "I have almost nothing in common with myself." To the extent that Judaism refuses to explore the basis of this rejection, it delivers itself up to irrelevancy—or worse.

In effect, Rabbi Steinberg's "basic Judaism"—and not his alone—seems to be directed toward a happier era than our own, to a better humanity than we know. His is a religion of the good deed and the good community, in a time when the quality of the good deed is anything but self-evident, and the good community is only a dream of something that might have existed. It strikes me —and I say this with no disingenuousness— as considerably too good for us. And in the absence of a corresponding genuine goodness without, it fixes itself upon the imitation mostly directly at hand, so that the noble intention is used to the advantage of the ignoble fact. Consequently, it is not astonishing that there runs through Rabbi Steinberg's book a colored thread of superficiality, even vulgarity, that entwines itself into the very warp and woof of his theology.

What happens is that Rabbi Steinberg accommodates his religious views with facility to the outlook of an American "Main Street" in its New Deal variant. What is worse, this accommodation represents not merely Rabbi Steinberg's state of mind, but also the state of mind of a large section of the American rabbinate, and much of the American Jewish community in general. It results in the perversion of the Jewish religion into a doctrine of social (and sociable) principles, the transformation of Messianism into a shallow, if sincere, humanitarianism, plus a thoroughgoing insensitivity to present day spiritual problems.

Rabbi Steinberg's Judaism is reduced to an earnestly moral socio-political liberalism, with divine sanction to boot. What are we to make of a rabbi who claims for the Mishnah and the Talmud that they guarantee the right to strike—thereby providing Holy Writ with the satisfaction of having paved the way for the National Labor Relations Act! Obviously, Rabbi Steinberg is entitled to his political opinions. He is even privileged, if he so desires, to seek divine sanction for them, though this strikes me as a daring and somewhat purposeless venture. But, in fact, what he is doing is to justify and ennoble his religious beliefs by parading what he deems to be their enlightened socio-political implications.

It is social philosophy that is his talking point, and not religion. Judaism, Rabbi Steinberg finds, has an immanent political doctrine that adds up to "political democracy, to a modification of capitalism in the direction of democracy, and a world state." How convenient . . . But what is this but an oblique way of saying that one of the merits of Judaism is that it permits its believers to read the *New Republic* with untroubled soul? And what kind of belief in Messianism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is it that finds itself represented in such diverse figures as Saint Augustine, Tennyson, and Hegel? And what a grotesque selection!

Rabbi Steinberg's Judaism is obviously native American. That is to say, in its heart it has no faith in the effectuality of religion on the American scene, and hastens to adopt a vocabulary with a higher popularity rating at the first opportunity. Genial and well-wishing—appropriate company for a business man's luncheon. When he says "all good men are Messiahs," it rings with all the fervor and conviction of "any boy can grow up to be president."

THE spiritual distress of the modern world does not arise merely because man perversely chooses to do evil rather than good. If it were as uncomplicated as all that, present-day Judaism – even Rabbi Steinberg's Judaism—would have the answer right at hand. The horror that breathes into our faces is the realization that evil may come by doing good—not merely *intending* to do good, but *doing* it. That is the trap of social action that the movements of progress and enlightenment of the 19th and 20th centuries fell into; and we – whether "best minds" or ordinary citizen—haven't the faintest inkling how to get out. Universal literacy has led to popular demagogy and mass mania; modern medicine finds unparalleled opportunities unleashed by the atomic bomb; the shortening of the working day goes hand in hand with the break-up of the family and the derangement of the sexual sentiment.

A century of incessant effort to the building of a humane life-on-earth has led with fantastic ease to a victorious life-in-death. To say, with someone like Sidney Hook, that the disaster is a result of our having failed to carry out the full implications of these high ideals, or our having misconstrued them, is in itself an unfounded assertion, not subject to test by experience. Moreover, it is the kind of assertion that our situation does not encourage—indeed, the situation makes it appear superbly beside the point.

There is a difference between the doctrine of original sin—which is open to many objections and which can have no place in Judaism—and the *fact* of sin. Judaism, today, and especially liberal Judaism, despite the horrors of modern totalitarianism, seems unable to recognize sin when it sees it. It does see the evil of individual wickedly-minded men (or nations), but it refuses to assign to evil its full and menacing stature. It has preferred to dress itself up in the clothes of 19th-century liberalism in order to attend a 20th-century execution. The transcendental hope of Judaism has settled into uncomprehending, complacent euphoria.

CONSEQUENTLY, Judaism looks blankly at the current trends toward a "theology of crisis." Sometimes it allies itself with the "naturalists" and "progressives" and talks of a "failure of nerve," thereby missing the point. For the trend in religious thinking (except in Judaism) is away from certitude, harmony, and peace. These are left to the self-styled "humanists." Or else it nods approvingly at the fact that God is a word once again in currency, without looking into the "how" and "wherefore." The "theology of crisis" represents a genuine discovery – though by no means a novel one. The gulf between man and righteousness has widened with frightening rapidity. And against the soothing inanities, generally either social or psychoanalytical, that gush forth from rabbinical pulpits, there is the chord struck by Kafka's sardonic judgment: "Plenty of hope —for God—no end of hope—only not for us."

That Judaism has escaped relatively scot-free from the ideological conflict betwen science and religion of the last few centuries is, as I have pointed out, a valuable asset. Yet it has had its drawbacks, too. The poignant sorrow over "the death of God," the striving for faith in a faithless world, has been relatively unknown to it. At a time when Judaism is in need of a world view, its perspective is still catastrophically narrow. Intellectual timidity, cultural immaturity, a reluctance to venture to extremes even when the extreme has become banal and quotidian —these are the outstanding features of contemporary Jewish thought.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We are beginning to wonder, and discuss, the question "why Jews are in the world"—even if, to date, we have ended with hoary platitudes. We have scarcely dared to ask "why *goyim* in the world?"—an important question, it must be conceded. Perhaps we are afraid that we will not be able to stop there, but will go on to the semi-blasphemous question "why men in the world?" Yet, if theology today is to ask any question, the last one is the most pertinent, whether it be asked by Jew, Protestant, Catholic, or atheist. A Jewish analysis of "the human condition" usually (with too rare exception) turns up as an analysis of the "condition of the Jews." Judaism, at the present moment, seems shy of asking the important questions for fear its answers might be inadequate.

Judaism is trying to approximate to a genuine theology through a heightening of the social conscience because its intellectual base is constantly narrowing. The prophetic vein has been abandoned (to be grabbed up by Protestant neo-Orthodoxy); the Law has buried itself in a dugout at the threat of the modern secular — and insane — world. What we have left are political lectures, fund-raising, Zionism, inter-faith activities, public relations, social work, and so on.

IT MAY be that I have no right to ask Judaism to take all this into account. The fault might as easily be mine for feeling these problems as it is Judaism's for not managing them competently. Or perhaps, whether one speaks blandly or tragically when walking off the cliff-edge that is the 20th century, is a matter only of personal vanity. But that is in itself a theological speculation.

SPRING 1916

ISAAC ROSENBERG

Slow, rigid, is this masquerade
That passes us as through granite air;
Heavily—heavily passes.
What has she fed on? Who her table laid
Through the three seasons? What forbidden fare
Ruined her as a mortal lass is?

I played with her two years ago,
Who might be now her own sister in stone,
So altered from her May mien,
When round pink neck a necklace of warm snow
Laughed to her throat where my mouth's touch had gone.
How is this, ruined Queen?

Who lured her vivid beauty so
To be that strained chilled thing that moves
So ghastly midst her young brood
Of pregnant shoots that she for men did grow?
Where are the strong men who made these their loves?
Spring! God pity your mood.

Along with Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, ISAAC ROSENBERG was one of the British "war poets" of the First World War. He was born in Bristol in 1890. In 1915, he enlisted in the Army and was killed in action in France on April 1, 1918. This poem is reprinted from his *Collected Works*, published by Chatto and Windus, London, 1937.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CLIMATE SHIFTS ON IMMIGRATION

Common Sense to the Fore on the Admission of DP's

JOSEPHINE RIPLEY

EUROPE'S DP's are not a drug on the market. Congress is just awakening to this fact. The spur to this awakening has been the realization that other nations are skimming off the cream of skilled manpower from the camps – while the United States has its hands tied with restrictive immigration legislation. With this awakening has come a favorable change in the climate of opinion with regard to immigration and DP's. Facts and reason have come to the fore, and it looks as if a new kind of realism will guide the discussion.

The State Department has been telling these facts to Congress for months. But it took the overseas tours of the various Congressional committees to drive the point home. Britain, they found, is drawing off 1200 workers a week into her mines, factories, and farms, and no limit has yet been set on the total that may be admitted. Belgium has brought in 20,000 miners, along with their families. Holland is absorbing 8,000 industrial workers. Canada is in the market for 5,000 lumbermen, and in addition is taking in 2,000 single women as domestics. Other countries are showing a similar interest in this hitherto neglected reservoir of manpower. The House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on DP's, in its report of November 15, after it returned from a survey of the European camps, warned:

"The United States is losing the opportunity to obtain much needed immigrant material by delaying enactment of a special immigration statute for resettlement of displaced persons. A lack of imagination or a heritage of old preconceptions . . . should not be allowed to blind the nation. . . ."

IT IS not only Congressmen who are becoming alert to what the DP's have to offer. Communities, taking stock of their postwar situation, are showing an even greater interest in the 95,000 farmhands, 30,000 domestic workers, 21,000 construction and maintenance workers, the thousands of doctors, surgeons, dentists, and nurses among the 300,000 employable DP's. A committee appointed by Republican Governor Fred G. Aandahl of North Dakota is studying the proposal that many thousands of homeless refugees be admitted to that state alone. Since 1940, the population of North Dakota has dropped almost 100,000; during the war farmhands and agricultural workers emigrated to the greener pastures of the big cities. A single club in North Dakota, organized by a Catholic priest to back the admission of DP's, has more than 10,000 members. Idaho, Montana, and other states which in the past seven years have seen their population decline sharply are experiencing similar emotions. Alaska, too, with a population of 133,000, one-third of whom are Indians and Eskimos in remote villages, needs immigrants. During the war, it is pointed out, the government was forced to organize Eskimos into guerrilla units in order to set up a pretense of coastal defense.

THE last session of Congress ended with emergency legislation to admit DP's still in congressional committee. Now those who advocate joining with other countries to give DP's a final haven, are closing ranks to bring the matter to a favorable result. As a member of the Washington Bureau of the *Christian Science Monitor*, JOSEPHINE RIPLEY has had an opportunity to observe at first hand the political atmosphere surrounding the battle over immigration legislation, and she here appraises the chances for its successful passage. Miss Ripley was educated in New England. She has published articles in *Tomorrow* and the *New Yorker*, and has also written for the radio.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Minnesota Committee on Displaced Persons, appointed by Governor Youngdahl, has been the first to take steps of a practical nature. It began a survey at the beginning of December to determine how many displaced persons could be "happily and prosperously resettled" in Minnesota. This survey is being conducted through ministers and priests, who go directly to the public for the necessary detailed information.

UNDER present immigration laws it is utterly impossible to move any substantial number of these DP's into the United States.

When, in 1929, the "national origins" plan came to be law, the annual quota for each European country was set at that fraction of 150,000 that the persons originating in the country in question bore to the total American population in 1920. The "racist" intention of the act was clearly delineated at the time: it was not only to restrict immigration in general, but specifically to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. The Northern European countries under this law get 82 per cent of the total immigration quota. But since the inhabitants of these countries are usually reluctant to emigrate, their average quota fulfillment for the past decade has only been 13.7 per cent; the rest of the quota goes to waste.

As it happens, about 200,000 DP's are natives of Latvia, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, and Esthonia. The *combined* annual quota of these countries is 1,583. The immigration law also specifies that quotas cannot be transferred from one country to another, or from one year to another. Any unused portion of an annual quota is simply written off the books. A further restriction is that not more than 10 per cent of the annual quota for any country can be used in one month.

Just how crippling all these restrictions are is seen in what happened to President Truman's directive of December 22, 1945, which authorized the filling of unused Central European quotas in order to admit 39,000 DP's during 1946. This directive ignored the one important fact: the German quota made up 26,000 of the total available. It also overlooked the influence of the shipping shortage joined with that provision of the immigration law that set a monthly limit of 10 per cent of the total. The net result was that less than 5,000 DP's were able to gain admittance in 1946.

Legislation to open the way for admission of 400,000 DP's over a period of four years was placed before Congress last April by Representative William G. Stratton, Republican, of Illinois, and public hearings were held on it. The Stratton Bill proposes no change whatsoever in the basic immigration law or established quotas. The 400,000 DP's it would admit represent the total of unused quotas during the war years, when only 7 per cent of the number of immigrants permitted under law were able to enter. Another bill, introduced by Congressman Chelf, proposes to bring in 100,000 DP's during the period of a year; it likewise suggests no amendment to the immigration laws, but makes allowance for admission on a "non-quota" basis. The Ferguson bill in the Senate provides for admission of an unspecified number—the exact figure to be determined later—on a "non-quota" basis. All of these bills call for screening of DP's by the military, the State Department, and the immigration authorities.

While gathering sentiment behind the Stratton Bill suffered some loss of momentum when the adjournment of Congress last session left it bottled up in a House subcommittee, it is felt that this will be more than compensated for by the favorable reactions of touring Congressmen, and the continued pressure of its supporters. By the time the Bill comes up, in the forthcoming regular session, it is hoped that the snowball of Congressional opinion will be rolling—in the right direction.

CERTAINLY, the sponsors and supporters of the bill, led by the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons, make an impressive body. Among the organizations pressing for its enactment are: AFL and CIO, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Conference, and many others. The support of the AFL was especially welcome, since that organization has been traditionally active in urging restrictive immigraton practices. This time it was people who are usually not too friendly toward labor who raised the venerable cry of "the danger of foreign workers competing with Americans for American jobs." To them, William Green, president of the AFL, explained that of the 100,000 immigrants in any one year, not more than 60,000 would be potential jobhunters; compared with the total labor force of 60,000,000, they would amount to about one-tenth of one per cent—scarcely a threat.

Even more significant was the reversal of its position by the American Legion. The Legion, always touchy upon the subject of immigration as a possible threat to "pure" Americanism, at first announced its opposition. In short order, however, it found itself ideologically disarmed and politically isolated. It argued that immigrants would take away jobs from American workers—and was informed by the CIO, AFL, and Department of Labor that the claim was unfounded. Its officials charged publicly that "thousands of foreigners are streaming over the United States borders every day" and it was informed by the Commissioner of Immigration that it was only about 800 per cent wrong! The Legion also asserted that 154,000 immigrants enter the United States each year under the quota system, and that this was quite sufficient. It learned that, in making this estimate, it had carelessly assumed that all of the 153,929 immigrants who may enter legally each year do so; in fact, the annual average of quota immigrants for the past ten years is 29,463. The absurdity of the accusation that these immigrants might be "subversive" or "Communistic" became evident almost in the uttering: these people are homeless exactly because they refuse to return to Soviet-dominated territories. Moreover, 80 per cent of the DP's are Catholic, and the Catholic hierarchy in this country took pains to point this out to the Legion.

Politically, the Legion found itself in direct opposition to the attitude of top brass and braid – among these the Secretary of State and former Chief of Staff, the Secretary of War, and the President himself, all noted members and alumni with whom the Legion likes to be pleasantly associated.

As a result, Legion policy was amended in October. It extricated itself from its embarrassment by drawing a distinction between the Legion's general stand against immigration, and its position on immigraton of DP's. It went on record as favoring admittance of "limited numbers" as "an emergency matter involving humanitarian considerations," while insisting that this "in no way affects the Legion's traditional policy of restricting all normal quota immigration." More recently past National Commander Paul Griffiths toured DP camps in Europe and returned to praise the nobility of their inmates.

THE State Department has an especially keen interest in the passage of such legislation, and it has done everything within its power to promote Congressional action. It has reminded Congress again and again that there are only four alternative courses.

The first is to forcibly repatriate the DP's. This would mean driving them back to their native lands at the point of a bayonet. These lands are now under Communist domination. Most of the DP's share the sentiment of the Yugoslav who exclaimed: "Should I go home to a political regime I hate and fear, to be tried by Tito who accuses me of being a collaborator during the time I was in German prison camps? The only one with whom I could have collaborated was God!"

The second alternative is to keep the DP's indefinitely in camps in the occupied areas, under the care of the International Refugee Organization. The consequences of this would be the moral and physical deterioration of some 850,000 people—innocent victims of the war—as well as a continuing expense to the American taxpayer.

The third possibility is to let them fend for themselves in the German economy. This prospect is enough to give military

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authorities fits and shivers. Friction between DP's and Germans is already intense. The Germans, bitter over their privation, perversely blame the DP's. These latter, for their own part, have little reason to feel kindly toward the Germans. To turn the camp population out into the already overcrowded German economy would be an incitement to riots and vagabondage, and would make the job of the occupation troops infinitely more troublesome.

The fourth alternative, and the one recommended, is resettlement in friendly countries, including the United States. This would enable these people to become self-supporting and self-reliant. It is the only alternative that could be a permanent, as well as a humane, solution.

REASONS of immediate need and long-term national interest should have combined to make American business regard the Stratton Bill with a benevolent eye. The shortage of labor in many trades is conspicuous: the garment industry in New York alone is in need of some 20,000 apprentices. Furthermore, businessmen who are traditionally worried about government spending, are aware that it costs $300 to maintain a DP in Europe for one year—and that it would cost $200 to bring him to the United States, find him a job, and settle him down. As *Fortune* remarked in its editorial for August 1947: "From the point of view of the employer—agricultural and industrial—the Stratton Bill is just horse sense."

Surveying the situation from the vantage point of historical perspective, *Fortune* saw in the hysterical trend toward a freezing of immigration a capitulation and a menace. In the October 1947 issue, Herrymon Maurer, in an article on "The Right to Move," flashed a danger signal: "The world inclines no longer to the *laissez-aller* of nineteenth-century America . . . but to the autarchic controls of twentieth century Russia. . . . The change from the free migration of the last century to the controls of the present is part of a change from free trade to quotas, from free business to state enterprise, from a measure of personal freedom to an overdose of state control."

Unfortunately, it did not seem that *Fortune's* point of view was shared by a majority of American industry. Traditionally, capital —as against labor—had always favored immigration as a source of cheap labor. But since 1933, American bankers and industrialists had conducted a fierce campaign to convince the American people that the New Deal was a "foreign" development. Whatever other effects this may have had, it resulted in business talking itself into a state of xenophobia; every time it looks abroad, it sees a threat. Consequently, neither the NAM nor the Chamber of Commerce has shown much enthusiasm for the proposed legislation.

MEMBERS of Congress of both parties have showed themselves receptive to the growing movement for emergency legislation to admit DP's. When one considers the powerful and broad-ranging organizational support for such a measure, it is not surprising that its advocates receive a friendly hearing. Congressman Stratton (Republican), whose measure is the only one on which hearings have been held so far, is normally regarded as a "party" man. So is Senator Homer Ferguson of Michigan, who introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Joining with the Michigan Senator in sponsoring the legislation are six leading Republicans—Joseph H. Ball of Minnesota, H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, John S. Cooper of Kentucky, and Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts—and two Democrats, J. Howard McGrath of Rhode Island, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Carl Hatch of New Mexico.

The Republican policy leader, Senator Taft, has been somewhat equivocal and shifting in his position, though recently the shift seems to have been in a positive direction. Last spring, when asked to act as Senatorial sponsor of the measure, he was quoted as declining because "I have too many fights on my hands already." Shortly afterwards, a correspondent from the *Jewish Daily Forward* quoted the Ohio Senator as saying that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he would not only vote for the Stratton Bill, but would speak to party members on its behalf. The hopes that this gave rise to were quickly dashed when, on his Western tour, he told a press conference: "I have not absolutely opposed any admission of displaced persons, but I think it should be carefully limited. . . . " His most recent pronouncement, on December 1, 1947, was that "I believe that the United States should assume its share of displaced persons remaining in Europe and admit them into this country if the total number does not exceed the total deficiency in legal quotas. I believe the condition calls for immediate action." For a lawyer, the phrasing was surprisingly vague; but for a statesman the call to action was heartwarmingly blunt. Another prospect for the Republican presidential nomination, Senator Vandenberg of Michigan, while never having committed himself on the issue, is counted on to vote "yes." He led the campaign for American membership in the International Refugee Organization, and is expected to follow through when it comes to the domestic legislation needed to implement that membership. The usually cautious Governor Dewey apparently saw no advantage in hedging, and has come out forthrightly in support.

WHO then is the opposition? It is a strange array – including individual Congressmen like Ed Gossett, Democrat, of Texas, and organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution—and the Communist party. The arguments they employ are an equally strange amalgam.

Thus, Representative Gossett charged that the DP camps are loaded with Russian spies and agents seeking to gain admission to this country at about the same time that the *Daily Worker* was crying that the Stratton Bill "is so worded as to exclude the anti-fascists and open the gates to hundreds of thousands who may have left their native lands to collaborate or work with the Axis powers." If Representative Gossett was blind to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the DP's were anti-Communists, the Communists were evidently not. On the other hand, the *Daily Worker* showed itself as eager to gloss over the fact that these DP's were forcibly conscripted by the Nazis as slave labor, as Representative Gossett was to gloss over the fact that the reason these persons were DP's was because they refused to return to Russian-dominated lands.

The arguments employed against the bill —by all parties—were scarcely worthy of refutation. The Communists charged that "former *Volksdeutsche* and other members of the Nazi armies, . . . will have priority for immigration to the United States"—an outright fabrication. Representative Gossett and the DAR all used the hoary argument that "foreigners" took away jobs from "real Americans." It was an argument that had been widely used during the depression of the 30's, despite the fact that between 1929 and 1935 the excess of emigrants over immigrants was 65,000. Indeed, these opponents of the measure seemed, on this occasion, to subscribe to the belief in a "mature" and "static" American economy with only a limited number of opportunities—a belief that they had elsewhere denounced as "subversive" and "un-American." They also made a great to-do about the housing shortage (about which in the past they had refused to consider any constructive legislation); what they resolutely failed to consider was that among the DP's were many skilled building-trades workers, who would more than compensate for the small increase in population needing housing due to immigration.

Actually, the "100 per cent American" supporters of harshly restrictive immigration laws have a rather checkered career upon the subject, to which their recent statements have not done justice. For instance, during the war many of them went out of their way to ask the State Department to make special arrangements to let in a large number of Mexicans to work in the fields of the South and Southwest. Many of these Mexicans have remained illegally in this country at the request of their employers. It is well known that some of the important constituents of Representative Gossett have pressed him to see that the immigration service did not too

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strictly enforce the immigration laws. And the immigration service has admitted that, because of the shortage of farm labor, it has been in no hurry to act up to the hilt of the law.

There was a visible edge of anti-Semitism in many of the passionate declarations against admitting immigrants. The fact that, of the 850,000 DP's, 550,000 were Catholic, 100,000 were Protestant, and 200,000 were Jews appeared not to matter at all. Nor did the fact that some 150,000 of the Jews were intent on getting to Palestine, and would not go elsewhere, make any difference. It was but another illustration that anti-Semitic prejudice is immune to matters of fact and even, at times, to matters of self-interest.

YET despite the relative smallness of the opposition to the Stratton Bill, and despite the incoherence of its platform, there is no doubt that this opposition has some measure of popular appeal. The explanation for this lies deep in American history—and equally deep in human nature, apparently. It is xenophobia, "the fear of strangers," an only too well-known human characteristic that has been exacerbated by the intense nationalism of recent times. There were complaints in 1647 because eighteen different languages were spoken in New Amsterdam, and in 1797, Representative Harrison G. Otis said in Congress: "It might have been all right to admit foreigners when the country was new, but it is no longer so." It is an old phenomenon of American history, this transformation of the despised alien into the "100 per cent pure" American who has only contempt for "foreigners." When Representative Fisher, of Texas (and a member of the House Immigration Committee) referred to the DP's as "dregs and riff-raff of Eastern Europe," he was in the tradition of the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850's, the American Protective Association of the late 1880's, and the Klu Klux Klan of our own day.

The experience of the anti-Nazi immigrants of the 30's indicates how tenacious this suspicion of foreigners can be. During that period there was a whispering campaign to the effect that German refugees were replacing native-born Americans in New York department stores, and that housewives had to carry along German dictionaries when shopping! The whispering campaign reached such an intensity that the largest stores were forced to refute it publicly. The department stores, it should be noted, courageously took the opportunity to state that "we share the deep and natural public sympathy for the plight of any refugee from any form of oppression and persecution."

The same rumor was popular in Pittsburgh. A committee of leading citizens investigated and found that of approximately 8,000 full-time employees in these stores, not one was a refugee!

In ordinary times, perhaps, this might be passed off as a deplorable human weakness, possibly with the remark that "there's a sucker born every minute." But when so high-placed a statesman as Senator Elmer Thomas admits that if the inscription on the Statue of Liberty were to be written today, he would have it reworded, it is a hint that a basic American ideal runs the risk of being subverted. At this juncture in our history, when democracy is being hard pressed by totalitarian ideologies, we can hardly afford to show ourselves so weak in our faith. An editorial in *Life* a little more than a year ago pointed out reprovingly: "There was a day when American sympathies would go out to all such people. Indeed, for a brief period (1917-21) our immigration laws paid them specific honor by exempting from all restrictions all victims of religious or political persecution." Perhaps, the editorial went on to speculate, "Americans just don't like the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses that the Statue of Liberty beckons."

If that turns out to be the case the greatest democracy in the world will have revealed itself to be constructed on some extremely shaky reeds. At the present time, fortunately, there is reasonable ground for belief that this revelation will remain only an unpleasant possibility.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN THE CELLAR

A Story

ISAAK BABEL

AS A BOY I couldn't tell the truth. Reading did it. I read all the time —during school, at recess time, on my way home, and even at night under the table, hidden behind the tablecloth that reached down to the floor. My imagination was always in flames. Because of my reading I played truant from all my world's affairs—I cut class to go to the docks, or to the billiard tables in the dives on Greek Street. I had no friends. Who would have wanted such a queer bird for a friend?

One day I saw a book about Spinoza in the hands of Mark Borgman, the top scholar in the class. He had just read it and couldn't help telling us about the Spanish Inquisition. His tale was merely learned mumbling —he spoke without poetry. I couldn't resist interrupting him. I began to tell all who would listen about ancient Amsterdam, the ghetto dusk, and the diamond-cutting philosophers. My gift for fantasy decked out and embroidered what I had picked up from my reading. I wasn't able to keep it in check. My imagination heightened the dramatic scenes, changed the endings, and made the plot much more mysterious. Spinoza's death, his unmolested, lonely death, arose before me as a full-scale battle. The Sanhedrin tried to extort a confession from him, but Spinoza was unflinching. I entangled Rubens in my epic. He stood beside Spinoza's bed, taking a death mask of the dead man.

My classmates listened with open mouths to this fantastic yarn, told with such enthusiasm. When the bell for the next period rang we scattered reluctantly. During the next recess, Borgman came right up to me, linked his arm in mine, and together we wandered about the school yard. Soon afterwards we became chums.

Borgman wasn't a bad fellow for an honor student. To his brilliant mind the school's teachings were only scribblings in the margin of the real book—and he was always searching greedily for that authentic wisdom. Even we foolish twelve-year-olds knew that an unusual scientific career lay before him. He never bothered to do his homework, just listened attentively in class. My talent for distorting and twisting even the simplest things attracted this sedate and well-balanced boy.

That year we were promoted to the sixth grade in the *lycée*. My scholarship was adorned with marks that just managed to pass me. I was so strange in my rambling frenzy that the teachers, after long deliberation, decided not to flunk me.

EARLY in the summer Mark invited me to his father's country house. Old Borgman was the director of the Russian International Trade Bank. He was one of those men who had transformed Odessa into a Naples or a Marseille. In him bubbled some of the yeasty ardor of the famous old Odessa merchants; he belonged to the guild of sceptical but sociable sensualists and idlers. Mark's father avoided talking Russian —he expressed himself in the Liverpool sea

---

ISAAK BABEL is a Russian writer, born in Odessa in 1894, whom more than one critic considers as among the two or three best short story writers of the 20th century. His life and works were the subject of an article by Raymond Rosenthal in COMMENTARY February, 1947. Since 1936 Babel's name has disappeared from all Soviet publications, and no additional writings of his have appeared. At present there is no authoritative information as to his whereabouts. Two other Babel stories, "The Awakening" (February 1947) and "First Love" (September 1947), have appeared in COMMENTARY. The translation is by ESTHER and JOSEPH RIWKIN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

captains' coarse and blunted slang. When an Italian opera company visited Odessa in April, Borgman arranged a dinner party for the *artistes*. The swag-bellied banker—one of the last of the Odessa merchant kings—launched a two months' intrigue with the high-bosomed diva. When she left Odessa she carried memories that did not burden her conscience, along with a necklace, not too expensive but in the best taste.

Old Borgman had the title of Argentine Consul and was President of the Stock Exchange—and I was invited to his home! My aunt Bobka told everybody in the back alleys. She spruced me up as well as she could manage. I took the tiny steam launch to Grand Fountain, the sixteenth landing pier. Borgman's villa stood on a low, reddish hillside, close to the seashore. Fuchsias smouldered in flower beds along the slope.

I came of a beggar-poor and peculiar family. The furnishings of the Borgman villa astounded and enchanted me. In the garden-walks yellow cane chairs gleamed, half hidden under the greenery. The dining table abounded in flowers, and there were green frames to the windows. In front of the house stood a spacious wooden colonnade.

In the evening the banker came home. After dinner he put the cane armchair on the edge of the cliff, above the smooth moving plain of the sea, stretched out his white-trousered legs, lit a cigar, and opened the *Manchester Guardian*. Odessa ladies played poker on the veranda. At the corner of the table a slender samovar with ivory handles was seething.

The sweet-toothed lady card players, untidy fashion-mongers and secret libertines with scented lingerie and voluptuous hips, waved black fans and put in gold pieces as stakes. Through the wild vine barrier the sun penetrated. Its fiery circle was immense. Coppery gleams weighed upon the women's black hair. Sparks of sunset lightly touched their diamonds—diamonds stuck everywhere—in the ravine between their buoyant breasts, in their painted ears, and on their bluish puffy fingers.

Night came. A bat rustled. The sea rolled blacker on to the red cliff. My twelve-year-old heart grew big with delight and the ease of someone else's wealth. My friend and I strolled hand in hand along a distant garden-walk. Borgman told me he was going to be an airplane engineer. It was rumored that his father would get the post of representative for Russian foreign trade in England. If that happened, Mark would get an English education.

In our home, at Aunt Bobka's, nobody talked about things like that. I had nothing to give in return for that steady flow of grandeur. So I told Mark that, although everything was different at my home, my grandfather Levi-Itzchok and my uncle Simon-Wolf had been all over the world, and had had thousands of adventures. I described these adventures, one by one. All sense of the limits of the possible left me, and I light-heartedly conducted my uncle Simon-Wolf through the Russo-Turkish war, then to Alexandria in Egypt. . . .

Night rose among the poplars, and the stars rested on the drooping branches—I spoke and flung my arms about. The fingers of the future airplane engineer trembled in my hand. With difficulty he tore himself out of the spell and promised to visit me the following Sunday. Heartened by his promise, I went home on the steam launch to Aunt Bobka.

THE entire week I imagined I was the manager of a bank. I closed deals in millions, with Singapore and Port Said. I bought a yacht and traveled about in it, alone. But on Saturday came the hour of awakening. The following day little Borgman was to visit me—and none of what I had told him had ever taken place. There was something else that existed, more wonderful than what I had invented, but at twelve I did not know how to deal with truth in the world.

Grandfather Levi-Itzchok was a rabbi, expelled from his village because he had forged Count Branitsky's signature on a check, and was considered insane by our neighbors and the kids in the street. I could not stand Un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cle Simon-Wolf, because of his incessant bawl, his senseless energy, and boisterous despotism. Aunt Bobka was the only person I could talk to. She gloried in my friendship with the banker's son, counted it a foundation for my future career, and baked a strudel and some poppy-seed pastry. The heart of our race, a heart that has endured through strife and suffering, was in that pastry.

Grandfather with his torn top hat and the rags on his swollen legs was packed off to our neighbors, the Appelkhots, and I begged him not to turn up till my guest had gone. We also managed to get rid of Simon-Wolf. He went off to the Bear, a nearby tavern, to drink tea with his jobber friends. In this tavern they served vodka with the tea, so we could count on his staying for a long while. Now I must explain that our family was not like other Jewish families. In our ranks we numbered drunkards, and men who had seduced generals' daughters, left them, and saved their skins by fleeing over the frontier. My grandfather, as I said, had forged a signature on a check, and now wrote blackmailing letters for abandoned wives.

I had done my utmost to get rid of Simon-Wolf, even giving him the three rubles I had saved. One can't get through three rubles so quickly. Simon-Wolf would not be home until late, and the banker's son would never find out that my story about my uncle's kindness and strength was trumped up. If one understood this story with one's heart, it was nevertheless real, yet anyone who just looked at the dirty, loud-mouthed Simon-Wolf for the first time would not easily recognize this inconceivable truth.

On Sunday morning Bobka dressed up in a brown cloth frock. Her good fat bosom spread all 'round. Then she put on a kerchief with black printed flowers, as on the Day of Atonement and Rosh Hashana. Bobka laid the pastry and the jam and the strudel on the table, and began to wait.

We lived in a cellar. Borgman raised his brows when he came along the humpy floor of the hallway. Just by the door was a barrel of water. As soon as Borgman came in I put out all my strength to entertain him. I showed him the alarm clock which to the last screw grandfather had made with his own hands. There was a lamp fixed on the clock so that at the hour and the half-hour the lamp lit up. I showed him a little tub of wax. Levi-Itzchok had prepared the formula, revealing his secret to no man. Then, we read a few pages of my grandfather's manuscript. This was written in Hebrew, on square yellow pages, big as maps, and was entitled "The Headless Man." It contained a description of all the people Levi-Itzchok had met during the seventy years of his life, starting from the towns of Skvir and Belaya Tzerkov, then coming to Odessa. Coffin-makers, synagogue cantors, Jewish drunkards, women cooks at circumcision festivals, and the rabbis who performed the ritual operation — such were Levi-Itzchok's heroes. They were uncouth, full of stammers, with thick noses, carbuncles on their bald patches, and crooked backsides.

While we were reading, Bobka entered in her brown dress. With the samovar on a tray, she floated across the room, wrapped up by her good fat bosom. I introduced Borgman to Bobka. She said, "Pleased to meet you," and held out her stiff fingers, moist with tension. Everything was going fine, better than I had expected. The Appelkhots hadn't let grandfather get away. I pulled out his treasures, one by one: grammars of all languages, and sixty volumes of the Talmud. The barrel of wax, the cunning alarm clock, and the mountain of the Talmud dazzled Mark—he couldn't have seen all these things in any other house.

We drank two glasses of tea and ate the strudel—Bobka nodded her head, withdrew backwards, and disappeared. I felt in high spirits, struck a theatrical pose, and began to declaim the verses I loved best in life. Antony bends over Caesar's body and addresses the people:

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
I come to bury Caesar,
not to praise him. . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus begins Antony's part. I gasped for breath and pressed my hands to my heart.

"He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honorable man."

Before my eyes, in the mist of the universe, floated Brutus' face—white. Growling, the Roman populace thronged toward me. I raised my arm—Borgman's eyes obediently followed it—my clenched fist trembled. I raised my arm . . . and in the window saw my uncle Simon-Wolf. He passed through the courtyard with the dealer Leikach. They were hefting a clothes-rack made of reindeer antlers and a red hall chest adorned with the heads of lions baring their teeth. Bobka too saw them from the window. Forgetting all about my visitor, she flew into the room, and clasped me with trembling hands.

"O my dear heart, he's been buying furniture again!"

Borgman in his school uniform stood up and made a bewildered bow to Bobka. There came a sound as though the door was smashed, a clumping of heavy boots in the hallway, and a noise of the chest being dragged along. The voices of Simon-Wolf and the red-headed Leikach were like thunder. They were happy, merrily drunk.

"Bobka," yelled Simon-Wolf, "guess how much I gave for these antlers!"

He blared like a trumpet, yet there was something uncertain about his voice. Though he was drunk, Simon-Wolf still knew how much we hated the red-headed Leikach, who prompted him to all these mad purchases and made him submerge our house in utterly useless furniture.

Bobka said nothing. Leikach was squeaking something to Simon-Wolf. To silence his serpent-like hissing, to drown my own anguish, I shouted Antony's words:

"But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters! if I were dispos'd to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honorable men.
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself, and you,
Than I will wrong such honorable men."

Suddenly there was a crash. Bobka had fallen, struck down by her husband. She had probably made some bitter remarks about the antlers. The daily scene began. Simon-Wolf's brass voice sealed all the cracks of the universe.

He shouted in his usual style:

"You suck glue out of me," he yelled in a thunderous voice, "glue to fill your dog's snout. . . . Work has blasted my soul. I have nothing to work with, neither arms nor legs. . . . You've tied a millstone about my neck, there's a millstone about my neck. . . ."

Cursing Bobka and me with Jewish curses, he promised us that our eyes would melt out of their sockets, and our children would rot in their mother's womb. We would not have time to bury one another before we would be dragged by the hair to a common grave. . . .

Little Borgman stood up. He was pale and looked about him on all sides. The vocabulary of Jewish curses was unknown to him, but he knew the Russian ones, and Simon-Wolf did not despise these either. The banker's son stood twisting his cap in his hands. I could see him double in front of my eyes. I shouted to drown all the evil of this world. My despair—my death-like despair—and Caesar's death, welded into one. The hoarse rattle of my speech rose from the very bottom of my being.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle;
I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That day he overcame the Nervii.
Look! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed;
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it. . . . "

But nothing could muffle Simon-Wolf. Bobka was sitting on the floor, sobbing and wiping her nose. Leikach calmly moved the chest behind the partition. Then my lunatic grandfather got the notion to come to my rescue.

He tore himself away from the Appelkhots and crept up to the window and began to scrape his fiddle, to prevent the neighbors from hearing Simon-Wolf's blasphemies. Borgman looked out of the window, which reached down to the floor, and fell back in horror. My poor old grandfather was grimacing with his blue, half-paralyzed mouth. He was wearing a quilted torn kaftan with bone buttons, and rags around his elephantiasis-swollen legs. His tobacco-stained beard hung in tufts and swayed in the window. Mark fled.

"It doesn't matter," he mumbled while running away, "really, it doesn't matter. . . ."

His school uniform and cap with the turned-up edges flashed through the yard.

As soon as he was gone, my anguish vanished. I was filled with decision and calm. I waited till evening. When my grandfather had covered another square sheet with his Hebrew flourishes (he was writing a description of Appelkhot's, where he had spent the day for my sake) and had lain down on his couch and fallen asleep, I sneaked into the hallway. The floor was of beaten earth. I groped forward in the darkness, barefoot, and in my long patched nightshirt. Through the cracks in the wall, the cobblestones glittered. In the corner was the barrel of water. I lowered myself into it. The water cut me in half. I put my head in, choked, and came out above the water again. From the shelf a cat was looking sleepily at me. The second time I stood it longer, the water gurgled around me, and my groan spiraled down into it. I opened my eyes, and at the bottom of the barrel I saw my shirt like a sail and my two small feet pressed close to one another. Once again I was weak, and came up. Beside the barrel stood my grandfather, in a jacket. His one tooth clinked.

"My grandson," he spoke his words very clearly and scornfully, "I am going to take a dose of castor oil, so that I'll have some sort of offering to cast on your grave. . . . "

I cried out, beside myself, and went into the water with a great rush. My grandfather's weak hands dragged me out. Then, for the first time that day, I burst into tears, and that world of tears was so vast and wonderful that everything but tears vanished from my eyes.

I came to myself in bed, wrapped in quilts. My grandfather was walking up and down, whistling. Fat Bobka was warming my hands in her bosom, and I let her keep them.

"How he shivers, our little fool, our child," said Bobka, "where does he find the strength to shiver so?"

My grandfather pulled at his beard, whistled, and continued walking up and down. Behind the wall Simon-Wolf snored with agonized breath. After a turbulent day, he didn't wake up during the night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM JAMES' MORALS AND JULIEN BENDA'S

It is Not Pragmatism That is Opportunist

JOHN DEWEY

IN HIS article, "The Attack on Western Morality" (COMMENTARY, November 1947), M. Julien Benda chose to include what he regards as pragmatic philosophy as a leading figure in that attack. In fact, he assigns to it, along with and by the side of Russian Bolshevist philosophy, a place in the very front rank of the intellectual forces engaged in undermining the morality of the Western world. This is a serious charge; none the less serious because those who call themselves pragmatists will be highly surprised to learn that the philosophy they profess has had any such extensive influence either for good or evil. One's first impression is that M. Benda is using the term "pragmatic" loosely to stand for all movements that tend to put immediate and narrow expediency—in the sense of profit, whether financial, political, or personal—above all other considerations. Since "pragmatism" is a specific philosophical term having a definite meaning that has nothing in common with the usage just mentioned, this loose use would indicate also a loose sense of intellectual responsibility. But M. Benda cannot claim even this protection, slight as it is.

For after saying in his main sectional heading, "The Socratic Christian Morality was the Only One Honored a Few Years Ago," and giving to his next main section the caption "Deliberate Assaults Against this Morality at the End of the 19th Century—the Preaching of Pragmatic Morals," he proceeds to make a specific identification of these "pragmatic morals" with the doctrines of William James—who published, toward the "end of the 19th century," his book entitled *Pragmatism*.

Here is what M. Benda writes—and I quote it because it is the one and only textual reference by which he even suggests the evidence for the specific charge leveled against pragmatic philosophy: "Cecil Rhodes had already declared at the time of the Boer War: 'This war is just because it is useful to my country.' To be sure, he was only a business man; but an intellectual, Kipling, took a similar attitude. Dare I say that it was close, almost violently close, *to that of William James* at the time the island of Cuba was grabbed by his compatriots?"

The italics are inserted by me in order to make clear beyond doubt just what M. Benda intended by reference to pragmatic philosophy and morality. As authority for his statement about James, he expressly refers to "his *Letters*, II, pp. 73-74." What James *actually* said we shall soon see. By a curious coincidence, James refers in a later letter to Kipling's attitude to American seizure of the Philippines, and what he says on that point will also be quoted.

HERE is what James actually wrote in a letter to a French philosopher-friend,

---

JOHN DEWEY, who here offers a sharp rejoinder to Julien Benda's criticism of pragmatism in "The Attack on Western Morality" (November COMMENTARY), is the leading spokesman of that movement today, as well as America's best-known philosopher. As a thinker, educator, and fighter for liberal causes, Professor Dewey has been for decades one of our great democratic leaders. He was born in 1859, and was graduated from the University of Vermont in 1879. From 1910 until his retirement in 1930, he taught philosophy at Columbia University. Some of Professor Dewey's books include: *School and Society, How We Think, Democracy and Education, Human Nature and Conduct, The Quest for Certainty, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, Freedom and Culture,* and *Problems of Men*. He lives in New York City, Maine, and Key West, Florida, and is a regular contributor to COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

François Pillon, on June 15, 1898. (The treaty of peace in which the "compatriots" of M. Benda's account grabbed the Philippines and Porto Rico—but *not* Cuba—was not signed until six months after the date of the letter to which M. Benda refers as his authority.) "We now have the Cuban War. A curious episode of history, showing how a nation's ideals can be changed in the twinkling of an eye, by a succession of outward events partly accidental." After referring to the "persuasion on the part of the people that the cruelty and misrule of Spain in Cuba call for her expulsion," and after mentioning the explosion of the Maine as the "partly accidental outward event" that suddenly changed the nation's ideals, he proceeds as follows: "The actual declaration of war by Congress, however, was a case of *psychologie des foules,* a genuine hysteric stampede at the last moment. . . . The European nations of the continent cannot believe that our pretense of humanity, and our disclaiming of all ideas of conquest is sincere. It has been *absolutely* sincere." The force of the "has been" in this sentence comes out clearly in a passage that follows: "But here comes in the psychological factor; once the excitement of action gets loosed . . . the old human instincts will get into play with all their old strength, and the ambition and sense of mastery which our nation has will set up new demands. It shall never take Cuba; I imagine that to be very certain. . . . But Porto Rico, and even the Philippines, are not so sure. We had supposed ourselves (with all our crudity and barbarity in certain ways) a better nation morally than the rest, safe at home, etc. . . . Dreams! Human Nature is everywhere the same; and at the least temptation all the old military passions rise and sweep everything before them."*

I do not quote this passage in defense of William James; he does not need it. Nor do I quote it for a reason which would be wholly relevant in another context: namely, an exhibition of the realistic quality of his vision based on a degree of intellectual integrity and clarity that unfortunately is not ordinary. I quote the passage as Exhibit "A" with respect to the quality of M. Benda's intellectual responsibility. It may well be that James believed that the undeniable "cruelty and misrule" in Cuba, if not ended by the action of Spain itself, would in the end justify resort to war in order to free Cuba. That, however, is a speculative surmise. The *actual war,* as it took place, he attributes to what was, relatively, an external accident resulting in a manifestation of the "psychology of crowds," in which deep-seated instincts temporarily overthrew control by intelligence. A few years later, returning to the theme, he wrote: "I think that the manner in which the McKinley administration railroaded the country into its policy of conquest was abominable, and the way the country pucked [sic] up its ancient soul at the first touch of temptation, and followed, was sickening." (*Letters,* Vol. II, p. 289).

James was not an absolute pacifist; possibly M. Benda himself did not carry his absolutism to the point of finding evil in the fact that the United States joined in the last war. But in any case, all this is merely introductory to the matter of the irresponsibility of M. Benda's account of James' position—his account of "pragmatic morality" as a philosophy of cheap and base expediency.

For it is not merely that what James wrote was written six months before the treaty in which we grabbed the Philippines. It is

* James' psychological doctrines were notable for assigning an importance to subrational vital conditions which he called "instincts," a position that is now a psychological commonplace but was then a startling novelty. That he glorified these instincts simply is not true. He treated them as facts of such weight that any policy for human improvement which ignores them is doomed to failure. It is pertinent to the understanding of the passage just quoted to refer to his more extended statements in "Remarks at a Peace Banquet" (1904), and "The Moral Equivalent of War," both published in his *Memories and Studies.* They are too long to quote here; but the opening sentence of the "Moral Equivalent" essay is: "I devoutly believe in the reign of peace and in the gradual advent of some sort of a socialistic equilibrium." The essay then states the necessity for a social order in which there must be a discipline in subordinating egoism and personal advantage to large and generous ideals if a peaceful regime is not to become a soft pleasure-economy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not merely that James was as right in his *prediction* that we would not take Cuba, as M. Benda is wrong in his report, fifty years later, that we *did* take it. These things are of minor importance, compared with the fact that William James was one of the first, one of the most indignant, and one of the most persistent of the Americans who protested against our seizure of the Philippines—an episode now happily terminated. Nor did William James wait till the seizure was legally completed. The very letter to which M. Benda refers in support of his statement about James, contains the following statement: "I am going to a great popular meeting in Boston today where a lot of my friends are to protest against the new 'imperialism.'" (James was the vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League.)

It is not for me to try to tell which horn of the dilemma M. Benda may prefer: either he had not read the letter, or he had read it and chose to suppress both it and the attempt to learn about the public and well-known record of James with reference to the war and to the taking of Philippines. It is enough that he transforms a "grab" of the Philippines which James opposed, into a grab of Cuba—which did not take place; he then makes this transformation the main—because the one and only—textual reference for what he goes on to make of pragmatic morality. Comment on M. Benda's moral standard of responsibility in intellectual matters does not seem to be needed beyond noting that this is an emphatic and more genuine instance of "the treason of the intellectuals" than any he himself has fumed against.

M. Benda's association of James with Kipling is a secondary matter. But it is possible to quote from the same volume of James' letters the facts on this point. In a letter written in February of the year following the letter just dealt with, we find this passage about Kipling: "I wish he would harken a bit more to his deeper human self and a bit less to his shallower jingo self. If the Anglo-Saxon race would drop its sniveling cant, it would have a good deal less of a 'burden' to carry." And then comes the passage with respect to the Philippines: "Kipling knows perfectly well that our camps in the tropics are not college settlements or our armies bands of philanthropists slumming it; and I think it is a shame he should represent us to ourselves in that light."

I doubt if it is mere coincidence that it was only a few short months after his reflections on the outbreak of the primitive in Americans, as in other men, that James wrote: "As for me, my bed is made: I am against bigness and greatness in all forms, and with the invisible molecular forces that work from individual to individual, stealing in through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, and yet rending the hardest monuments of man's pride if you give them time. . . . So I am against all big organizations as such . . . all big successes . . . and in favor of the eternal forces of truth which always work in the individual and immediately unsuccessful way."

This quotation from the man who is presented by M. Benda as teaching a gospel of immediate "practical" success suffices, I believe, to show how "violently" M. Benda "dares" in his account of the pragmatism of William James. It is a typical specimen of how far he "dares" in his whole account of pragmatism. Although I am far from claiming that all of us who are named pragmatists measure up to either the intellectual or the moral stature of William James, I definitely do claim that the passage just quoted from him comes as close to the spirit of pragmatism as M. Benda's account is remote from it.

THE culmination of what M. Benda "dares" is found in passages in which he affiliates pragmatism with the philosophy held and practiced by those in control of the Soviet Union. One of these passages is in the heading that reads: "Two Forms of Pragmatic Ethics Particularly Triumphant at Present," the second of the "two forms" being explicitly identified with the philosophy of Bolshevist Communism. This identity he "dares" to assert in the sentence reading "[prag-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matism] tends to recognize no moral values —justice, truth, reason—except as determined by practical considerations—or, more exactly, by economic interest"—i.e., in the case of the triumphant Bolshevist version. Were I to say that M. Benda's account of the latter philosophy is no more accurate than his version of pragmatic philosophy and leave the matter there, he might use that remark as evidence of an attempt to defend Russian official philosophy. So I will say that Macaulay's schoolboy might well be aware of the fact that no practical considerations of any sort, not even those of "economic interest," are determining factors of Bolshevistic philosophy. On the contrary, it is as absolutistic as the philosophy with which M. Benda has allied himself, although the absolutism is that of "dialectical materialism" instead of what is presumably in the case of M. Benda a "spiritualist," possibly supernatural, variety. In any case the conflict of the two philosophies with one another is that of rival absolutisms. It is curious to observe that the absolutistic state philosophy of Bolshevist Russia interprets American pragmatism in pretty much the same fashion as the absolutistic M. Benda.* Neither can "dare" to report pragmatism in its own terms as the systematic elaboration of the *logic and ethics of scientific inquiry*.

The ideological amalgam expressed in M. Benda's phrase, "Socratic-Christian," is, to say the least, perplexing. Socrates was put to death on the ground that his questioning of accepted moral and civic doctrines was subversive. According to all accounts, the one thing for which he stood, the one thing that caused his death at the hands of established and recognized authorities, was that he placed the right and authority of continued systematic inquiry in the search for truth above all other authorities that claimed the right to regulate the course of life. M. Benda presumably has reasons he does not disclose for substituting "Socratic-Christian" for the usual phrase, "Judeo-Christian." But as long as these reasons are kept occult, one can only say that it looks a good deal like an attempt to eat the cake of supernatural absolutism and at the same time keep some of it under the pretense of questioning absolute claims. In any case, it is pertinent to state that, on the face of known facts, those who still assert the rights and authority of *critical* systematic examination of all *received* teachings and belief from any source—among whom pragmatists are numbered in the first rank—have the prior claim to the title "followers of Socrates."

IF M. BENDA should decide to write a responsible account of pragmatic philosophy, including its bearings on morality (for the phrase "pragmatic morality" *taken by itself* is meaningless), the account might well take its point of departure from the one and only correct statement in his recent article: the profound aversion of pragmatic philosophy to absolutisms of any sort, whether of the reactionary Right or the reactionary Left. An account that started from that point might be led to consider the grounds on which this aversion is based. These grounds are as simple as they are sufficient. By its own nature, absolutism of any kind tends toward a dogmatic assurance that regards all questioning of its tenets as morally subversive, morally destructive, and hence to be suppressed. The course of history from Socrates and Galileo to the present day of Bolshevist Communism, shows that this outcome has been an actual consequence *in fact*, not merely an implication of absolutist theories. The intolerance which follows in theory and practice alike from the dogmatism accompanying absolutism in belief invites, indeed demands, the elimination of dissenters as morally and politically dangerous. Purges did not begin with Nazism or Bolshevism. They follow when absolutism becomes a dominant philosophy.

But even this persecution of dissenters by imprisonment and death is not its only seri-

* For the most recent effusion from the Soviet Union on American philosophy, particularly pragmatism, served up with *sauce Vishinskyeuse*, cf. "Contemporary Bourgeois Philosophy in the U.S." by M. Dynnik, in the November 1947 issue of *Modern Review*, with a critical comment by Sidney Hook.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ous moral consequence. The less overt and less obvious suppression and perversion of inquiry may be an equally damaging result. The most effective means of smothering free inquiry proceeds from creation of an intellectual and moral atmosphere of matter-of-course conformity to ways of belief and behavior which are given the status of "eternal truths" through the backing by institutions whose prestige rests upon the supposed possession of these truths fortified by the weight of sheer historic success. It is absolutism, not pragmatism, which rationalizes the success of the status quo by identifying the real with the rational and existence with the real. It is still absolutism, and not pragmatism, which makes success in accomplishing a specially devised result its ultimate and all-sanctifying goal at the price of any means. It is not pragmatism but the system of M. Benda, insofar as it is absolutistic, which has something deeply in common with Bolshevist Communism.

IN THIS connection the words already quoted from William James are of deep significance. He does not speak of "eternal truths" but of "the eternal forces of truth which always work," although *immediately* without success, as rootlets of plants work because they are *alive*—not because of external authority. The worst thing morally that can be said about the claim to be already in possession of eternal and absolute truth is that it can choke the life which otherwise would everlastingly be active in discovery of those temporal, even quotidian, truths by which life itself develops, disclosing as it develops still more truths that are alive because they are not closed and finished—as every "truth" which claims absoluteness is bound to be.

As for the moral and intellectual responsibility of the account given by M. Benda of the pragmatism he attributes to James, I can hardly do better than cite a statement by the authentic William James of what he regarded as the chief vice of American life: "That extraordinary idealization of 'success' in the mere outward sense of 'getting there' and getting there on as big a scale as we can, which characterizes our present generation." It is probable that one of his best known phrases is "that bitch-goddess success." This man who everywhere and all the time attacked what M. Benda presents as "pragmatic morality" is the man the latter "dares" to align with the Cecil Rhodes who (allegedly) said that something was just because it was useful to his nation! I should almost be grateful to M. Benda if I could believe that the very distortion of his account might serve to recall the attention of the present generation to all we still need to learn from the spirit that animates our legacy from William James.

What that spirit is can best be grasped not by isolated passages but from the whole of his writings, which reveal his profound love of variation, freshness, and spontaneity, his pluralistic conception of an open universe and man's creative role in it, his experimental theory of meaning and truth, his unwavering hospitality to new insights, and his imaginative fertility. To lump James with men who have called themselves "pragmatists," many of whom show no familiarity with his writings, who make absolutes of their doctrines, and who substitute the authority of uncritical tradition or violence for the authority of continuous scientific inquiry, is to be victimized by words. All the large words and abstractions of our time have been abused. After all, Hitler called himself a "socialist," Stalin calls himself a "democrat," clerical authoritarians call themselves "humanists," and Franco calls himself a "Christian."

To look behind the words to the substance of a man's vision is the sign of the free and sensitive intelligence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MR. ZANUCK'S "GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT"

Reflections on Hollywood's Second Film About Anti-Semitism

ELLIOT E. COHEN

LIFE being what it is, last year's publicity out of Hollywood to the effect that Twentieth Century-Fox was "lavishing its all" on its super-production of *Gentleman's Agreement* could not help but arouse a certain apprehensiveness. In Mr. Zanuck's wizard hands was one of the great human issues of our time. Almost inevitably, some felt, there would emerge from the Hollywood belt line another huge purring stratoliner of a film, in whose chromium-bright hollow interior we would be sky-borne, passive as packages, to be redeposited two hours later quite untouched, and only a little airsick.

It is a pleasure to report that for once in a lifetime Mr. Zanuck is even better than his billing. The plain fact is that *Gentleman's Agreement* is a moving, thought-provoking film, which dramatically brings home the question of anti-Semitism to precisely those people whose insight is most needed—decent, average Americans. In honesty and reality, it is immensely superior to a film like *The Best Years of Our Lives,* Hollywood's machine-made slicky on postwar GI problems. If there is any justice, it should win at least half as many Oscars.

Gentleman's Agreement is neither streamlined nor glib. As a matter of fact, in its beginnings it is awkward and groping, like an earnest, unpracticed speaker struggling with a complex subject. But this is not altogether inappropriate: we are going to look at that curious, archaic aberration, anti-Semitism—as it exists not in darkest Naziland, nor among our own lunatic fringe, but among Americans of good will—the nice lady in the next seat—yes, one suspects uneasily, even oneself.

Mercifully stripped of Laura Z. Hobson's modish, schoolgirl prose, the story has a parable quality. The crusading young writer from the West is struggling unhappily with his first big assignment on a great national weekly—a smashing series on anti-Semitism. His wife is dead; he has a little boy; his mother keeps house for them; and then there is the girl, the magazine publisher's niece, a bit of an intellectual, recently divorced, beautiful, very Sutton Place—and liberal!

Then, so as to come closer to the actual feel of anti-Semitism, Phil decides to masquerade as a Jew. Undeniably creaky in the novel, on the screen this device instantly unlocks drama, as such devices have done for centuries on the stage. Moreover, the device has a precise aptness here—for anti-Semitism is always false identity, the hallucinatory identification of flesh-and-blood Jews with that centuries-old myth of the Western world: the somehow-sinister Yid.

Because it can happen even to the Gentile Phil, we see that Jews have really nothing to do with anti-Semitism except to serve as its targets—no more than the character of the "witches" had anything to do with witch-burning. Anti-Semitism exists among Christian Indians in Peruvian mountain villages where no Jew has ever been seen. Anti-

---

CROSSFIRE was the first, *Gentleman's Agreement* is the second in Hollywood's film cycle against anti-Semitism to reach the nation's screens. ELLIOT E. COHEN wrote the "Letter to the Movie Makers" published in the August COMMENTARY, in which he offered some reflections on the potential of *Crossfire,* and of the film medium generally, for fighting prejudice. In this article Mr. Cohen appraises *Gentleman's Agreement,* and speculates on the uses and limitations of present-day propaganda for democratic causes. Mr. Cohen is editor of this magazine. Perhaps we should mention that he is here expressing his own views, which are in no sense official.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Semitism is a problem not of Jews, but of Christian mentality.

So Phil Green begins his pilgrimage into the lower depths of high-minded America. No sinister adventures befall him, there are no screams or shots or whips or blood. Every episode is a thrice-told tale; but, seen through Phil's eyes, they evoke the horror of unashamed inhumanity in broad daylight amid familiar scenes.

"Put yourself in his place," fair-minded Americans say—and *Gentleman's Agreement* does just this, literally and doggedly: the colleague's sneer at the luncheon table, the restricted apartment house, the jobs for Gentiles only, the drunken insult, the circles where one is "tolerated" and the genteel clubs and hotels and universities and neighborhoods where one is not, and the sharp, brutal rejection of my children by yours.

But the film's thrust goes deeper than mere exposé. Phil's "liberal" fiancée begins to falter under the burden of his "Jewishness" and its penalties—she has an upper-bracket sister in Darien; there is to be a party to celebrate their engagement; her anticipatory shrinking before her sister and her friends is tinged with fear and distaste for Phil's involvement; she is beginning to run away. She is put to the critical test when Phil's Jewish friend Dave turns up in New York, with a fine job ready for him *if* only he can find a house for his family. And Kathy has a house, a cottage she owns but has never lived in, in Darien's most desirable (and restricted) subdivision.

It is here that Kathy turns and fights. In a ringing speech of hurt and defiance—the film's finest scene—the deeper conflict is brilliantly revealed, and the drama broadens suddenly into a confrontation of the issue that is perhaps most central of all to the future of our democratic form of society. (It is an issue broader than anti-Semitism, though anti-Semitism has become—for good and sufficient reasons—one of its chief symbols.) Kathy says—and remember, she is the high-minded girl who suggested the series to her publisher uncle:

"It's no use Phil . . . you're doing an impossible thing. You are what you *are* for the one life you have—you can't help it if you were born Christian instead of Jewish. . . . It's a practical fact [like being good-looking instead of ugly], not a judgment that I'm superior. But I could never make *you* see that. You'd twist it into something horrible—a conniving, an abetting—the thing I loathe as much as you do. . . .

"Don't treat me to any more lessons in tolerance either. I'm sick of it. I'm not going to marry into hotheaded shouting and nerves and you might as well know it and know it now!"

Kathy's clean-scrubbed American loveliness and her good finishing-school English are a long distance from the German of the grubby tradesmen, school teachers, and civil servants whom our troops interrogated at the war's end. But their answers and hers have an ominous similarity: "What do you want of me? I am only a little man."

There, in this stormy lover's quarrel, is exposed the reef that, many think, can split our whole Western way of life. What can be expected of *me*—what can I expect of *myself*—I who am only one lone individual in a huge, buzzing, global industrial society, full of uncharted problems and unrighted wrongs? And it is the dramatic merit of *Gentleman's Agreement* that—as Kathy poses the question with almost siren-like persuasiveness—it faces us with a real dilemma, carrying sharp prongs either way. Dave's house and Dave's job and Dave's "kind," why is it not enough to sympathize, and pass it off with the right, progressive opinions and pamphlets and ten dollars to the right committee—after all, must we sacrifice our friends and "our kind"? One has but one life to live—"crusades" are not for us. What is the responsibility of the innocent bystander?

A number of writers for this magazine remember the answer of Rabbi Leo S. Baeck, survivor of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, to the inevitable question one of us asked him: "What was it about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the German people that made it possible for it to happen there?" "One thing above all," said Rabbi Baeck. "The Germans have never known what it means to be a citizen as you know it in England or France or America. They have never known what it means to have won the right, by conquest of the state, to say as an individual what a king once said: the state is I. In England and America, when the ultimate evil comes, instead of bowing the neck, the citizen stands up and finds the strength to say, 'This has gone far enough. . . . So far—no further!' "

Inevitably, we asked the second question, "Does that spirit of citizenship, in the old sense, still exist—could it happen in England, in America?"

"That the next decade will tell us," said Rabbi Baeck. "But I think it needn't happen here. Not if Americans remember what it is to be a citizen, and that means to know when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no'—especially the latter. . . ."

What grim, tenacious Phil learns is that to beat anti-Semitism we must fight not only the Gerald L. K. Smiths or the high-society anti-Semites, but the good, wholesome, liberal Kathies of the nation, not merely the actively evil, but the inactively good. And that—we also see—means struggling against —perhaps better say putting into their proper place—some of our most cherished present-day ideals and living patterns—among them, even that holy of holies, this nation's real shrine, that little white cottage called home.

Kathy fights like a tiger because she is fighting for her Home—meaning all the great, desirable things like security, family, comfort, children with "every advantage," flowered chintz, lovely china, a garden. . . . Say no to that? Who could or would? But is it only the obsessed who see something else growing, like the worm in the bud, as the Kew Heights, Chillington Manors, and Darlton Acres spread from coast to coast, not only for the rich, but "for families of modest means"—shelter for "our kind," but a fortress against the "others"?

If we are not careful, the American frontier might finally close in a new isolationism — domestic and international — shade-grown in that quiet dead-end street in that charming subdivision (complete with restrictive covenants) just seventy-two minutes from Grand Central Station.

The battle of the next century, says *Gentleman's Agreement,* will be fought out in the homes of America. That is more than a Fourth of July orator's flourish. Extend it a bit to include churches and schools, and it is the plain truth.

Kathy *does* something. What she does, looked at soberly, is more than a little romantic and "impractical"—she lends her cottage to Dave. But symbolically it is sound. She does something that represents nuisance and bother in her own home, her own neighborhood. When it comes to anti-Semitism, says *Gentleman's Agreement,* we must work at it, not only with our aldermen and congressmen, but where it counts doubly—in the daily circumstances of our personal lives, one by one, individually.

TO THOSE who have had great dreams for the "cinema," the unreeling of *Gentleman's Agreement* holds a secondary drama. Once more, against the scoffers both inside and outside Hollywood, the film is attempting to show itself as something better than combination peep show and juke box. It has been a long drought since *Grapes of Wrath* —and it is exciting to see *Gentleman's Agreement* demonstrate once again that the medium is there, and the talent, too.

In the face of this picture's substantial achievement it would perhaps be churlish to point out that mature art is not yet there. Yet, though the makers of *Gentleman's Agreement* have a sure touch with emotions, they are highly insecure in their handling of ideas, non-typical personalities other than the most familiar, and milieux other than the stock backgrounds. Almost none of the secondary figures in *Gentleman's Agreement* is clearly conceived. Faced with a liberal publisher who is neither Edward Arnold nor Melvyn Douglas, the producers seem helpless; and the fashion editor, the Jewish scientist, the Jewish conservative, and Phil's col-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leagues on the magazine count for little more than confusion. And the party in Darien, the party at the publisher's, the fashion editor's apartment, the "sophisticated" conversations —well, there you see an art fumbling because it is neither practiced nor mature enough to know its way around much of America. But given twenty more good pictures, who can doubt that the story will be different?

To one Jew—and certainly to many others —the restraint, the thoughtful seriousness, the broadness of concept of *Gentleman's Agreement* are gratifying. Here is no sensational exploitation of anti-Semitism like *Crossfire,* mixed 98 per cent thrills and 2 per cent pious preaching. However sincere its aim, the melodrama *Crossfire* seemed misguided. It portrayed anti-Semitism in such extreme terms of drunken violence and viciousness as to evoke no identification in the great mass of decent Americans—and anti-Semitism is, unhappily, the problem first and foremost of decent middle-class people (and in America aren't we all middle-class, at least by identification?) of good, but passive will. And it is good, for more reasons than one, to see the Jew presented as in Dave Goldman—a little too stereotyped, to be sure, but in the image of strength rather than in that of the "poor Jew" scapegoat of *Crossfire.* And we like the fact that *Gentleman's Agreement* builds hopefully (and realistically) on American strength, where *Crossfire* seemed alarmist and defeatist.

Old-fashioned though it be, we confess a preference, when it comes to matters of public enlightenment, for the straightforward approach represented by *Gentleman's Agreement.* This film is amazingly free of the latter-day propagandist's bag-of-tricks.

Gentleman's Agreement is advertised for what it is; it respects itself and its audience's intelligence; and it has enough faith in what it has to say to risk saying it plainly and with some of its complications, rather than relying on shock, or trapping the unconscious, or sneaking up on its public from behind the ambush of soap opera dramas, fast-shooting detectives, noble hackdrivers, and the Kid Kourages of the comic books. It does not try to fight stereotypes with stereotypes; or slogans with slogans. Whatever its shortcomings, it chooses the open road of thought and art. In a word, it is not manipulative. *Gentleman's Agreement* is a soberer picture than *Crossfire,* and it may lack its thrills, but in the end it is both less preachy and more convincing.

Sometimes I wonder whether fighters for good causes are as well advised as they suppose in putting aside the sound old tools of fact and eloquence and art for the ingenious propagandistic devices borrowed from the arsenal of those whose task—in mass-selling, in totalitarian politics, both of the Right and "Left," and in war—it has been to make the bad cause appear the better. If you have reality on your side, why not enlist as your ally your neighbor's own good sense of reality, using your art to sharpen that sense and to remind him, with the fullest possible impact, of his own experience, best judgment, and highest personal standards?

Would Czarist Russia have built Potemkin villages if it had had real ones? In the fight against anti-Semitism, in a country like our own where it is neither official nor respectable, one would hope that we could place less weight on the cute and the clever, and more on the frontal approach—made through the agencies and the "media" whose authority people respect in matters of serious concern to them. Comic books, laudable as they may be for other purposes, are not among these, I venture to say, nor are singing commercials.

OF COURSE, this picture—except for its suggestion of job competition—goes hardly at all into the *whys* of anti-Semitism. Jew-hatred is not purely mysterious. It exists for no *good* reasons, but there are reasons—social, economic, political—for its existence. Politically, anti-Semitism has vast destructiveness—it gave Hitler his chief leverage in his bid to destroy Western democratic society. For their own self-protection, Americans need to learn how it works.

If *Gentleman's Agreement* effectively drives home the social dimensions of anti-Semitism to a wide audience and points out a direction, this is perhaps contribution

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enough for one film. We trust that future films—and novels, the radio, and journalism—will not content themselves with covering the same ground. Further exposés are not likely to be very useful; anti-Semitism hardly needs more publicity; and there are even dangers in repetitive advertising of the phenomenon, unless we add to the public's knowledge and insight into its mechanism and its role.

Failing to explain anti-Semitism, we may only underscore the "mystery" of the Jew which is its core; a half-dozen more films and a continuing spate of novels presenting the Jew merely as a problem in our society (and not as a normal part of its daily life) may only serve to further confirm his "alienness" and his dangerous out-group isolation.

We must begin to tell the whys. That we haven't is partly due to an underestimation of the intelligence of the American people—and of their allergic resistance to propaganda—plus premature adaptations of psychotherapeutic techniques to mass fields where their efficacy is, to say the least, unproved. In this country we have probably the best-informed population the globe has ever seen. It has a particular appetite for how-comes, wherefores, and reasons why.

Only the other day I heard a foreign scholar comment on the astonishing preoccupation with psychological mechanisms and human behavior he has noted in the conversation of ordinary Americans, whether the talk ran on sports, politics, or family problems. Some one has said that, judging by our national curiosity and scepticism, Missouri must be the native state of at least 80 per cent of our population. As a people, we love scientific explanations.

Today, in the wake of *Gentleman's Agreement,* there is the possibility of explaining anti-Semitism to countless receptive ears, and of talking causes—and cures. It is a great pity that we are not better prepared. For unless we deepen momentary interest through sounder knowledge, more intensive discussion, and programs of social action, we cannot hope to reach down into the core of the malady and alter attitudes. The roots of anti-Semitism are deep and tangled.

Films like *Gentleman's Agreement* represent only first steps. What do we do next? One wonders whether defense programs in the field of group hatred have not been focusing disproportionately on short-term emotional techniques designed for mass media—in which, incidentally, their means are quite inadequate for the enormous saturation needed to have them take effect, considering the competition for public attention. Not to speak of the fact that in using these techniques we may be adding our own mite to building up the stereotype-responding mass mind which, when the chips are down, is always the best resource of democracy's enemies. (But that is a longer story.)

Should we not be giving more emphasis to informing and enlightening those who shape attitudes on anti-Semitism in this country—editors, writers, teachers, the clergy, political, industrial, and labor leaders, thoughtful people generally?

Let us be sternly practical. A thousand ministers will be wanting to talk on anti-Semitism this month. Where is the small library of books (large and small) written on the level such men can respect—cogent, non-apologetic and non-propagandistic, authentically scientific—making clear to them the origins and meaning of anti-Semitism and the place of the Jew in America today? What would you give to an editor who wanted to read up on the subject? To the director of a national radio forum, or the program secretary of a national federation of clubwomen? To a social science professor for an undergraduate seminar? Yes, education is slow. But what is faster? Happily, the enemy is not now at the gates, there is still time. It *is* later than we think. But it is earlier than we fear.

Now, for a ticklish matter. This week some thousands of Gentiles—the subject is in the air—will be asking Jewish acquaintances for light on anti-Semitism, in the car on the way home from the Community Chest luncheon, over the cigars after that business deal. Isn't Mr. Glantzberg a Jewish leader—surely *he* knows. Does he? This writer has been bewildered at the lack of knowledge of the simplest facts about anti-Semitism—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much less its causes or how best to fight it—which he has heard exhibited by Jewish community leaders who could have told you to the last nickel the cost of a new 1,000,000-volt X-ray machine for the Beth Solomon Hospital, or to the last dunam the amount of land bought by the Jewish National Fund in the past year.

We have heard admissions made—supposedly out of "fairness"—of the partial responsibility of Jews for this or that phase of anti-Semitism that hadn't a factual toe to stand on; and we have heard exaggerations, old-wives' tales, unconscious distortions of Jewish and American history and experience, parroted ideologies, and sheer ignorance and prejudice parading as seasoned wisdom and Jewish policy, world without end. When do we start educating the Jews? For the sake of their own self-respect and peace of mind, and for the sake of their fellow-Jews, whom they presumably lead. Also, you can never tell when a Gentile may ask a serious question.

IT WILL not seem ungracious, one hopes, to take issue with *Gentleman's Agreement* on two points where insufficient knowledge seems to have misled its makers.

The picture displays a Jewish leader who belongs to an organization that believes in "hush-hush" on the problem of anti-Semitism. This writer knows some Jewish individuals, but no organization that stands for such a policy. As far as we know, all have welcomed the film-makers into the struggle, and have tactfully refrained from making the kind of quips that traditionally greet the last fire engine at the four-alarm fire. On the other hand, Jewish organizations—not one or two, but most—do question the wisdom of mere hullabaloo as applied to certain phases of anti-Semitic activity. For example, they oppose mass picketing or breaking up fascist demagogue meetings, as practised by the Communists; they believe such action strengthens rather than halts today's feeble and publicity-starved hate groups. Recent events have proved the quarantine strategy correct.

Another shortcoming is the way in which the picture plays down the real differences involved in American group life. Often it seems to be saying: "Be tolerant; after all, we are all exactly alike." The converse would seem to be that if we weren't, one would not need to be tolerant.

To make tolerance conditional on uniformity is risky for groups, and for America, too. It is not a matter of flag or nationality: and none of us wants "national minorities." We are all Americans. But to most Jews being Jewish is more than being religious in the creedal sense, or standing one's ground negatively against anti-Semitism. Dave is visibly different from Phil, as you can see in the picture; his son, too, will be noticeably different from Phil's. There is a richness, variety, and value in group life that the "no difference" formula overlooks.

We will be a less tolerant and a poorer country unless we learn not only to permit but to prize the variety and values of American people who don't normally appear in the ads—the Irishman, the Pole, the Italian, the Seventh Avenue dress manufacturer and the bearded Orthodox rabbi, the men of other eye-slants and skin colors.

America, if I read the old documents aright, was not meant to be a country club for people "just like us." The "exclusiveness" of the gentleman's agreement, collusive or legal, was no part of the picture; nor was the genteel pattern, native or acquired, the prescribed ticket of admission. It was to be a free land for all kinds of people.

In *Democratic Vistas,* perhaps the most timely of all American books for our present dilemmas, Walt Whitman said: "The common ambition strains for elevation, to become some privileged exclusive. The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass; nothing will do as well as common ground."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MONTH IN HISTORY

INTERREGNUM IN PALESTINE

The UN Goes Home—Reaction to Partition—Immigration

MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM

THE delegates to the Assembly of the United Nations hurried from Lake Success to catch the ships and planes which would take them back to the countries in whose names they had spoken to an attentive world. Many, returning to nations torn by industrial and political strife, might be pardoned if they were to cast a wistful backward glance at a country where Democrats and Republicans, Wall Street and the CIO and the AFL, were all agreed in principle on the Marshall Plan. And certainly in a world in which hunger and devastation had so commonly followed war, the Arcadian plenty of an unprecedentedly prosperous United States had a lure of its own.

Yet for all that, most of the delegates were eager enough to get home to the families and the countries they had left behind. Many things had contributed to the sense of futility which made them glad to get back to the real world, even in its more unpleasant aspects.

This was not to deny that the session of the Assembly had offered some grounds for satisfaction to those who were easily satisfied.

Session's Balance Sheet

The United States delegation, and those who thought more in terms of forms than of the realities behind them, could hail the decisions of the Assembly on Greece, on Korea, on the creation of the so-called "Little Assembly." Yet, since in all these instances the Soviet Union and its satellites had refused to accept the decisions of the Assembly, they remained without practical effect. In the cases of Greece and Korea, the Assembly could appoint commissions and propose solutions, but it could not coerce an unwilling Soviet Union into paying them any heed. Nor could the "Little Assembly" be expected, in the face of a Soviet boycott, to function more effectively than its parent body—whose authority the Russians at least theoretically recognized. These decisions might help to fix the blame for the continuing deadlock between the United States and the Soviet Union; they did not in any measure serve to resolve that deadlock.

Indeed *Izvestia* reported that the Soviet Union had won a significant victory by defending a "just cause," while the United States had suffered a "shattering defeat." The American successes in respect to Greece, Korea, and the "Little Assembly" it attributed to the "mechanical voting" of delegations which bowed to American "dictation." And it pointed out triumphantly that these victories made no differences anyway, since the Soviet Union had no intention of recognizing them. On the other hand, *Izvestia* held

---

THE aim of "The Month in History" is to select out of the stream of events the principal developments affecting Jews—in America, Europe, Palestine, and elsewhere throughout the world—and to assess without bias their significance in the light of a long-range historical perspective. MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM was associate editor of *Common Sense* and has had years of experience as a news analyst. He is now in Europe, where he is spending some weeks studying the strength of democratic forces. Mr. Goldbloom was born in New York City in 1911 and is a graduate of Columbia University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the Soviet Union had successfully repelled the attack which the United States had launched against the principle of unanimity—sometimes less affectionately referred to as the veto. The success of this attack, *Izvestia* declared, would have menaced "the very existence of the United Nations Organization." Clearly, the Russians remained unconvinced by either the debates or the votes of the Assembly.

The Road to Partition

But if the Assembly had produced little comfort for those who hoped that its sessions might in some degree heal the partition of the world, it gave eminent satisfaction to those who asked that it achieve the partition of Palestine—though this too was in doubt until the final moment.

The principal question which had blocked the partition subcommittee of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, and served as a rallying point for opponents of partition, was that of implementation. The United States had quickly withdrawn its original proposal for a volunteer force—perhaps because it found little support, perhaps merely because it had been offered on the spur of the moment and appeared considerably less attractive on the morning after. But this left the problem of carrying out an Assembly decision still unsolved, since the British steadfastly refused to heed American suggestions that they accept that responsibility. Britain had made her position in this respect abundantly clear at the very beginning of the discussion. Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones had at that time announced her intention of surrendering the mandate and her unwillingness to have any part in imposing a solution not agreed to by both Jews and Arabs. Subsequently, this had been reiterated several times by British spokesmen both in London and at Lake Success.

Nevertheless, the idea of leaving Britain the job of overseeing the transition period was so attractive to the United States delegates that they wrote it into the report of the partition subcommittee. Hence when Sir Alexander Cadogan once again reiterated the British position, it was hastily decided to solve the problem of implementation by pretending it did not exist. It was simply assumed that, when Britain surrendered the mandate, Jews and Arabs would cooperate with the UN's supervisory committee in setting up states within the boundaries assigned to them. So far as it concerned the Jewish Agency and Haganah, this expectation was undoubtedly justified. But insofar as it applied to the Arabs, it seemed over-optimistic.

Partly because of doubts raised by this lacuna, partly because of the fact that many delegations—and not only those of the Arab states—remained unconvinced of the justice of partition, only twenty-five of the fifty-seven states in the United Nations voted in favor of the subcommittee's report when it came before the Ad Hoc Committee for consideration. Thirteen delegations voted against, seventeen abstained, and two were absent. Partition thus had failed to win a two-thirds majority of the nations voting —as it would have had to in order to carry in the full Assembly; and it had actually received the votes of less than half the member nations of the UN. Moreover, within the next few days four states—Greece, Haiti, Liberia, and the Philippines—which had abstained or had been absent in committee, announced their intention of casting negative votes when the report came before the Assembly.

But by the time the question came up for decision in the General Assembly, five days after the Committee vote, something had happened. Nine states which had not voted in the Committee were now found on the affirmative side; the negative had gained only the vote of Greece, which had previously abstained, and the abstention of Chile, which had supported the report in Committee. Siam, which had opposed the report, had in the interim ceased to be represented because the overthrow of its government by a militarist coup d'état had resulted in the dismissal of its delegate. The final vote was 33 to 13 for partition.

Most ascribed this shift in favor of partition to last-minute pressure from the American delegation. However, whatever one might think of the possibility of United States influence on Haiti, Liberia, and the Philippines—all of which had announced their intention to oppose partition and all of which voted for it—and on Paraguay, it hardly seemed likely that New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Lux-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emburg were as susceptible to American influence on this point.

However the votes for it were obtained, the United Nations were now committed to partition. The actual execution of the plan was entrusted to a five-nation commission, representing Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama, and the Philippines. If force were needed in the process of implementing partition, the nations represented on the commission were not expected to supply it. Rather, they were expected to rely, in the first instance, on the militias of the new Jewish and Arab states—which, in view of the Arab attitude, appeared to mean on Haganah. If this did not supply the commission with adequate means for preserving order, it could appeal to the Security Council for assistance. The value of this resource seemed somewhat doubtful, however, since the Security Council still had no forces at its disposal. Of the permanent members, on whom the responsibility for carrying out the will of the Council primarily rested, Britain had made it clear that her forces would not be available for the preservation of order in Palestine once she had surrendered the mandate. France and China—the one a last-minute convert to partition, the other abstaining to the end—had neither the troops to spare nor the will to use them. In the United States, public opinion polls showed that while 65 per cent of the people favored partition, only 3 per cent approved of sending American troops to enforce it. While there were rumors that Russia was quite willing to supply troops to assist in the maintenance of order in Palestine, it was clear that the Western powers were not going to welcome Russian troops into the Middle East.

After the Vote

Though they knew that victory in the UN merely began a long and difficult task, Zionists throughout the world were jubilant at the prospect that a Jewish state would be born in a matter of months. And they began to mold its image after their hearts' desires, both in those immediate practical respects which were the task of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council in Jerusalem, and in those broader aspects in which the divisions in a Jewish state would parallel those in any other. Preparing for the establishment of a provisional government, sources close to the Agency let it be known that Dr. Chaim Weizmann would probably be its president, David Ben Gurion its premier, and Moshe Shertok its foreign minister. In various capitals, the Agency set about acquiring buildings for use as legations. Some British Zionists began to suggest that the new state become a dominion of the British Commonwealth—a proposition which American Zionists seemed unlikely to find acceptable. And the veteran Labor Zionist leader Marc Jarblum, informed of the vote at Lake Success while attending an international Socialist conference at Antwerp, exclaimed: "And it will be a socialist state!"

On all these questions—and, indeed, on the desirability of partition itself—the Revisionists and their terrorist offshoots had different ideas. But their dissent was lost in the midst of the general Zionist rejoicing; amidst the crowds which danced in the streets of Palestine, as well as among the celebrants in New York, their voices were for the moment unheard.

If the Revisionists were a threat with which the leaders of the Jewish Agency might have to deal in the future, the Arabs were a problem which would not wait. The supposed finality of partition was something which they were very far from accepting; when the delegates of the Arab states stalked out of the Assembly, crying out that the Charter of the United Nations had been murdered, the field of action of Arab anti-Zionism was merely transferred from Lake Success to Palestine and the entire Middle East.

In Palestine itself, the first consequence of the Assembly's decision was a three-day Arab general strike. Officially, this was supposed to be a non-violent demonstration, and there was reason to believe that sporadic and premature violence formed no part of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee's plans. However, there could have been few who really expected the strike to take place without some bloodshed. Violence, beginning in Jerusalem, spread to the Tel Aviv-Haifa borderland, then to Haifa, and finally throughout the entire country, from Safad in the north to the Negev. Two weeks after the Assembly had approved partition, the death toll in Palestine neared two hundred. Hun-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dreds more were injured by weapons ranging from sticks and stones to hand grenades and machine guns. In Jerusalem alone, the property damage was reported to exceed four million dollars.

The original initiative in the riots which occurred in widespread sections of Palestine appeared to come from the Arabs. But it did not long remain with them. On the first day of the rioting, Jewish mobs—reputedly led by the Irgun—evaded the police and Haganah guards to start fires in the Arab part of Jerusalem. Haganah served as a moderating influence, engaging in defensive activities but attempting to restrain Jewish desires to retaliate on the general Arab population. However, before long it passed to the counter-offensive. While in the first weeks, the number of Jewish victims surpassed the Arab, Haganah reprisals, combined with indiscriminate bombings and shootings by Sternists and Irgunists, reversed the casualty figures. Talk of truce disappeared, and both sides appeared to be preparing for all-out war.

The Zionist thesis had been that Arab anti-Zionism was the work of a few leaders and a small upper class, while the mass of the Arabs desired only to live in peace with their Jewish neighbors, and that there would be no insuperable difficulties in initiating that cooperation between the two groups which was recognized as a *sine qua non* for the viability of the future state as soon as the nations of the world had made an unequivocal decision. Events did not seem to be bearing this thesis out.

If there was to be an Arab rebellion against partition, it was probably better from the Zionist point of view to have it now rather than later. The recruiting offices which had been opened in the Arab states were just beginning to enroll volunteers for the struggle in Palestine; they had as yet done comparatively little to arm and train them. Above all, the British were still in Palestine, and committed to the preservation of order until their surrender of the mandate next May. While the Jewish Agency and Haganah representatives protested that the British police had in many cases been inactive, or actually killed Haganah men in unprovoked attacks, the presence of British police and troops probably prevented the totals of casualties and damage from rising higher than they did. British armored cars, directed from reconnaissance planes, helped, in the early stages of disorder, to break up mobs and avert large-scale conflicts.

In the Arab World

Meanwhile, the repercussions of partition were making themselves felt in other parts of the Arab world. In the Protectorate of Aden, anti-Jewish riots flared up. Before they had been put down by British troops rushed in from the nearby Crown Colony of Aden, they had claimed more than one hundred victims, mostly Jewish.

For the moment, however, Arab resentment against partition only sporadically took the form of anti-Jewish violence. The Baghdad papers reported that Jews had "contributed" two million dollars for the fight against the Jewish state; and in Egypt, the Jews were called upon to follow the example of the Iraqi Jews and contribute "generously" to the "Save Palestine Fund," in order to dissociate themselves from Zionism. In Baghdad—which had the largest Jewish community to be found in any Arab land other than Palestine—it was even reported that some of the marchers in the anti-partition demonstrations were Jews.

The Baghdad anti-partition demonstrations used generalized anti-imperialist slogans as well as specifically anti-Zionist ones, and appear to have been directed primarily against the United States. In Egypt, the demonstrations which took place were more anti-American and anti-British than anti-Jewish, a fact which lent some credence to the report that Egyptian Communists played a part in their organization. At the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo, secretary-general Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha told one crowd of demonstrators that the Arabs would fight, but that their cause would not be won by fighting in the streets. He also called on them to remember their duty to the foreigners within their gates. Perhaps more important than the demonstrations was the proclamation of a holy war by the council of Al Azhar, the world's premier Moslem university.

In Syria, there were demonstrations in Damascus, in which the principal targets were the United States and Russia. Demonstrators burned three automobiles belonging to the American Legation, and when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

troops prevented them from reaching the Russian Embassy, they consoled themselves by wrecking the offices of the local Communist party and killing or injuring a number of its members.

In Lebanon, students demonstrated and strikes occurred in Beirut, but the Lebanese Central Committee for Palestine urged that strikes and demonstrations be abandoned in favor of fund-raising for the cause. Meanwhile, fourteen hundred volunteers enrolled to fight in Palestine on the first day that the recruiting office in Beirut was open.

In only one Arab state did there seem to be no likelihood of either popular or official action against partition. Emir Abdullah of Transjordan—whom the Zionists and the Mufti had long despised as a British puppet—had appealed for peace in the weeks before the vote, and he had not associated himself fully with any of the plans for resisting the establishment of a Jewish state.

One reason for this may have been that he hoped that partition would eventually result in a merger between the Arab part of Palestine and Transjordan. It was not altogether certain, however, that if such a merger were to occur it would be altogether to Abdullah's advantage. For it was quite possible that he would find that not he, but the Mufti, would dominate such a combined state. Certainly the Arab section of Palestine was richer and more modern, as well as more populous, than Transjordan. And in the Arab world as a whole, there seemed little doubt that the Mufti's stock stood higher than did Emir Abdullah's.

But the latter also had certain potential advantages in the struggle for supremacy. In the first place, he might reasonably count on the support of his fellow Hashemites on the throne of Iraq—though their power was limited by the relatively high degree of popular participation in that country's political life. (Indeed, revolutions and counter-revolutions had in recent years taken place within the framework of the Iraqian monarchy, with consequent drastic alterations in its foreign policy.)

In the second place, Emir Abdullah had at least the nominal allegiance of the Arab Legion, trained and commanded by British officers and generally agreed to be much the best military force in the Arab world. How much advantage he might derive from this depended, in large part, on the extent to which the British were willing to get involved.

And finally, it was by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that an alliance of convenience might be formed between Abdullah and the Zionists. Certainly, Abdullah's interest in expanding his territory to include the Arab part of Palestine was one of the few factors in the Arab world which offered the Zionists any scope for maneuver. The differences and rivalries between the other Arab states might decrease the effectiveness of their common action against Zionism, but there was no chance that any of them would find common ground with it.

The Prospective Immigrants

If Jews in the Arab countries were not faced with immediate large-scale violence, it nevertheless seemed clear that their position was neither comfortable nor likely to become more so, in the near future. Arab spokesmen at Lake Success might, and often did, make distinctions between Zionists and Jews. But these distinctions were more difficult for the common people of the Arab countries.

In Egypt, Zionism had already resulted in the first anti-Jewish riots in almost a thousand years. Similarly, in other Arab countries in which the Jews had lived for centuries, their position was now becoming increasingly untenable.

Most Zionist leaders recognized the existence of this by-product of their movement; for many among them it cast a shadow over the enthusiasm with which they greeted the establishment of a Jewish state. Others, however, felt also that it promised a rich reservoir of immigrants for Palestine when the DP camps should have been emptied and the possibilities of further immigration from Eastern Europe cut off by the Iron Curtain. And these new immigrants would have a birth rate equal to that of the Arabs.

Meanwhile, Europe was still the principal source of immigrants for Palestine. The DP camps of Germany and Austria were full to overflowing, and at times newcomers would pour into them afresh at a rate of thousands a month. Desperately, the American authorities in Austria tried to transfer some of their wards to camps in Germany; their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equally desperate colleagues in the American Military Government of Germany refused to hear of the idea.

However, it appeared that relief was in sight—if not for the Jews of Eastern Europe, at least for the custodians of the DP camps. In Rumania, where the Communists had for two years kept the veteran anti-Semite Georg Tatarescu in office as foreign minister, they now felt strong enough to substitute for him the leader of the Communist party, Ana Pauker. The new foreign minister—herself the daughter of a rabbi—almost immediately took the initiative in securing an agreement with Hungary for the closing of the escape routes by which Jews had been leaving Rumania in droves.

The official reason for this agreement was that too many political opponents of the existing regime had been escaping; it was impossible to stop them without sealing the borders. This was undoubtedly one reason for Mrs. Pauker's action, but there may have been others. For one thing, Russia's interest in encouraging illegal immigration to Palestine was considerably reduced by the fact that it would no longer be an effective means of embarrassing the British. For another, Mrs. Pauker differed from Tatarescu in that she unquestionably wanted Rumania's Jews to stay in the country—where she hoped that they might form a bulwark of the new regime against a popular opposition some sections of which were not free of anti-Semitism—whereas Tatarescu had almost certainly welcomed Jewish emigration.

Perhaps something of the same tendency on the part of the Communist regime to regard Rumania's Jews as an integral part of the community was shown in the new drive to make their organizations conform to the official pattern. Dr. William Filderman, who had for two years fought to preserve the autonomy of Jewish organizations in the face of Communist pressure, finally felt compelled to resign as chairman of the Union of Rumanian Jews and president of the Federation of Jewish Communities. The reason given was "acute shortage of funds." A few days later, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that representatives of all Jewish political organizations *except* the Union of Rumanian Jews had met to demand the reorganization of the governing boards of the Jewish communities. These boards, they charged, contained representatives of the suppressed National Peasant party and the about-to-be-suppressed Liberal party, who hampered "the natural development of the Jewish communities and the democratization of Jewish life." They appointed a committee to present lists of suggested personnel for the new governing boards to the minister of public worship—a former Iron Guard leader.

Illegal Immigration—Past and Future

If the barriers erected by the East European states against Jewish emigration remained in force and proved airtight, the pressure for admission to Palestine in the immediate future would to some extent decline. However, it seemed reasonable to expect that while the flood of Jews from countries within the Soviet sphere would taper off somewhat, it would not completely cease for some time to come.

In any case, there remained the estimated 250,000 displaced Jews in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Unless the Jewish state were to decide on a drastic upward revision of the quota of 150,000 immigrants which the UNSCOP had suggested for the next two years, many of them would have a long time to wait. The British announced that their 1,500-a-month immigration quota for Jews would not be raised until they had left Palestine. Presumably, the British naval and air blockade of Palestine would be enforced until then.

Another factor in the situation was the Jewish Agency's desire to get immigrants from the United States and other Western nations. It seemed probable, too, that a sizable allowance would have to be made for Jews from the Arab countries, like those who were now fleeing Aden.

Illegal immigration in the past two years had had, unfortunately, far more success in keeping the DP's—and the rest of the world—at fever heat than in getting additional Jews into Palestine. When the "Aliyah" succeeded in slipping past the blockade with 187 immigrants, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that this was the first such instance in almost a year (many other Jews, of course, were on intercepted ships, and had ended up in Cyprus)—a small result indeed as against the expenditure of money, energy, and blood which had been put into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the smuggling of immigrants into Palestine. However, illegal immigration, in addition to attempting to serve an immediate need, had had important political uses: it had put terrific pressure on the British, directly and through the influence of an outraged public opinion in England and America, and it had served as one area in which the Haganah could compete with the Irgun and Sternists in the field of intense nationalist feeling.

Illegal immigration would no longer play a part in the plans of the official Zionist movement. But just as it had served the Zionist leaders as a weapon against the British, so now it might become an instrument for the terrorist groups in any struggle for power over the Jewish state.

Perhaps it was the expectation of some such development which inspired the campaign the Haganah was now waging to bar the Irgun from the routes leading from the DP camps to the Mediterranean. The aftermath of one grim battle, in which a group of Irgunists had attempted to rescue some of their comrades held prisoner by the Haganah in a DP camp in the French zone of Austria, had been the death of one Haganah man. Now nineteen Irgunists faced a French military court, charged with his murder.

The IRO

But mechanical control of routes would not reduce the pressure of DP's desiring to emigrate. One possible avenue of hope was in the work of the International Refugee Organization in resettling its charges in countries other than Palestine.

So far its achievements in this respect had been anything but spectacular. England had admitted some DP's; so had France. Few of these were Jews, however, since both countries sought chiefly miners and agricultural workers. Canada had admitted a few thousand; so had other British dominions and some Latin American countries. But perhaps the best measure of IRO's success in dealing with the problem it faced was that the 25,000 Jews admitted to the United States in the past year—within the quota system, since the Stratton and other bills designed to make DP entry easier still languished in committee—were more than any other country had accepted.

If the IRO was to function more effectively in the future, it was clear that it would require additional funds. Instead, however, it was now faced by insistence on the part of the member nations—above all, by the United States—that it cut its budget for resettlement still further. Even judged purely from the point of view of the economy-minded, this seemed like doubtful wisdom. For the less effective the work of resettlement, the longer it would be necessary to maintain the DP's in their present unproductive state. And this was more expensive than an intelligent plan of resettlement would have been.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

THE JEWISH PAINTNER

Why He Is What He Is

HARRY GERSH

A DELICATESSEN store man is different from a candy store man or a merchant, but not much. A little of the spice of the pastrami, a little of the fat he didn't trim off the corned beef enters his soul. But basically he is a small businessman with all the same faults and virtues.

A furrier is different from a dress operator or a hat blocker. But essentially he's a needle worker, argue though he will about it—and he will.

But a paintner—he's *takeh* different. Who could confuse a paintner with a plumber, a carpenter, a bricklayer? They all work on buildings, but who works like a paintner?

A sociological definition of a paintner would include the following: he is Jewish; he makes his living (some living, he would counter) with brush and paint pot; and his attitude to his customers is like that of a Spanish grandee to a peasant, a king cobra to a worm. Think of the butcher during the war or a candy store man with a case of Chesterfields and a box of Hersheys during the same years, multiply by ten thousand, and it still isn't the same. At best these gentry were nouveaux-arrogants, and it didn't last long. The paintner's attitude has a patina.

Let's get one thing clear from the start. A paintner is more than a painter with a Jewish accent. There are a hundred thousand painters — poor, middling, or expert practitioners of the brush and pot—not a bit different from a million other building tradesmen. A paintner, now, is something else again. He is a painter with a *schmichick*. He is a mechanic, a *balmalocheh*, an expert craftsman—but still that's not the whole story. Other trades have older histories, but none has the paintners' special traditions. No other craftsman has his personal psychology molded, tempered, permeated by his craft. A paintner remains a paintner, awake, asleep, or at the movies. The world is colored by his paintnering.

He didn't deliberately adopt his biased view of the world. He didn't sit down in convention and argue it out and pass a resolution to that effect. Part must be written down, I suppose, to economic and social determinism—the rest is sheer trauma.

It might be interesting to investigate the etymology of *balmalocheh* as it refers to the paintner. Some suggest it derives not from "master of the tribe" or craft, as is commonly thought, but rather from Baal Moloch, the master of the abomination.

HARRY GERSH's best credential as an authority on that formidable tribe, the Jewish paintners, is his own genealogy. Says Mr. Gersh: "My grandfather was a paintner, my father is a paintner, five of my six uncles are paintners. The other one—an intellectual snob—became a needle worker. Even I had a card in District Council No. 9, Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, Paperhangers, Stripers, Carriage Stripers, and Helpers of America, American Federation of Labor." At present Mr. Gersh—possibly an intellectual snob himself—is a member of the publicity department of the Textile Workers Union of the CIO. Our readers will remember him as the author of the highly controversial dissent on the cuisine of the Jewish home ("Mama's Cooking: Minority Report," October COMMENTARY). Mr. Gersh attended Drexel Institute of Technology, Brooklyn College, New York University, and the University of Paris. He was born in New York in 1912.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE paintners' trouble began forty or fifty years ago, much antedating the recent movement to encourage Jews to enter the handicraft trades. To be sure, even then they were masters; not only of the brush and palette, but of the cut direct, the snub superior.

A newly arrived Jewish immigrant, circa 1900, had little choice of new occupations. If he couldn't afford a store, or even a peddler's pack, he became a garment worker. But for a few, the fast talkers, the adventurous, the strong of back, there was painting. Any of the other building trades might have done as well, but painting had two great advantages—the boss supplied the tools and skill came after the job.

A carpenter needed a plane, a hammer, a saw, a chisel, and ease at handling these intricate machines. A plumber needed other tools and the ability to light a blowtorch. A bricklayer needed years of training and waterproof feet. But a paintner—anybody could *schmier* and look good in a dark hallway.

The boss paintner knew all this—he may have started the same way himself—and he took advantage of his knowledge by paying the greenies half or quarter scale. After all—was the customer a *mehven* on painting? And in that same dark hall who cared? So it wasn't *schmiered* so perfect.

So an old-timer (he came over last year) took a greenie (he came over last week) and made a paintner of him. First he established relationship. He was a relative or a friend or a friend of a relative. Then he took the new one to a paint store for outfitting and training.

Since a paintner needed only one tool in his kit, the buying of that tool became highly important, almost a ritual. However, after a good deal of arguing, weighing, and measuring, the greenie was fitted to a putty knife. Then came a pair of white overalls. Union rules specify white overalls, changed each week. But the second pair would come after he had earned some money at his new trade. If the trainer were finicky he might order the new one to buy a duster. But that was ostentation.

The sale of the putty knife and overalls entitled the trainee to a tour of the store for an eye acquaintance with the rest of his trade. He was shown paint brushes and kalsomine brushes and ceiling brushes. Also enamel, flat, oil, turps, and varnish. Then he was ready to swing a brush.

The next day the newcomer was taken before a boss paintner. "He's a good mechanic from the old country yet," the old-timer stated, "but he doesn't know American materials so good. So he'll work for a little less for a while." And another paintner was born.

With the birth of this new craftsman there was the attendent psychic trauma. The new paintner knew he wasn't a mechanic, knew that another trade took better tools and greater skill. He knew it and the other paintners knew it and the boss knew it—and he knew that they knew it. But the customer didn't know it. The customer didn't know anything. And a tradition was born—the customer doesn't know anything. And who has respect for a person who doesn't know anything?

Feeding this disdain was another factor—proximity. Most building craftsmen—for example, plumbers—see their ultimate consumers only in an emergency. Others, such as bricklayers and lathers, never see the householder. But the paintner comes around year after year, always working under the customer's eye. He is cursed with the amateur over his shoulder, with housewives' indecisions, with spots on the furniture and floors. And he curses right back.

Products of a literate culture, the new Jewish paintners immediately set out to make the language of the trade more esoteric. Some superficial students in the field have ascribed the trade patois to unfamiliarity with English. A more realistic study would indicate that they were only trying to do for painting what others before them had done for law, medicine, and the dance. In the interest of impressiveness they were clothing what is essentially a simple art in verbiage outside the ken of ordinary people.

The new language had so powerful a hold on the trade that I, a very literary high school student in my youth, never knew the simple original English words for the paintner's tools I worked with—I carried a "straisel" around during several summer vacations without embarrassment, but blushed when we bought a new one and the bill was marked "1 Straight Edge." And I painted many windows with a good "seschtel" before I heard ordinary folk call it a sash tool. But,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being a good union man, I must keep some of the other words secrets of the trade.

THE paintner has other troubles. He is forced by the eccentric fancies of women folk to live in a world of strident off-key hues. He is beset by lemon yellows, baby-blues and pustulent chartreuse, when all he wants is a decent, honest eggshell off-white. This spectrum conflict further colors his approach to people. Exhausted by the many whirling, clashing colors thrown at him, he sees the world in dull grey, the world and half its people. With women he usually sees red.

The boss paintner, more interested in money than in artistry, has also wounded the craftsmen. Anxious for the job, the *balabuss* offers a little carpentry and plastering with the painting. The paintner is stuck. He must fix plaster and refit the window sash before applying his colors.

It is this list of psychic and physical wrongs that has made the paintner what he is today. His uneasy sense of his own lack of craftsmanship, the lady of the house eternally over his shoulder, a growing color-phobia and the pressure to dabble in other skills in which he has even less artisanship than at painting—all these make him feel persecuted. And what do the persecuted do? They find a scapegoat to persecute.

The genius of persecuting someone involves setting the right tone at the first meeting. In order to create at once the correct rapport between himself and the householder, the paintner has developed the classic opening gambit:

"And what kind of *meiseh-meshineh* color do you want now?"

At one stroke the paintner has established the fact that the customer has no color sense, that she is looking only to make trouble for a poor working man, and that it would be far better if she left the whole matter in his hands without further hints or interference —especially if she values peace of mind more than some silly partiality to some non-existent color.

Sometimes, out of a feeling of delicacy usually foreign to the paintner (or because the boss is present), the classic opening is more devious or hidden. I remember being witness to the following scene, a silent witness because the customer was a family friend and the paintner was a fellow craftsman who worked for us.

MRS. LEWIN was having the whole house painted. It was a long-thought-out and long-planned affair. She and her husband had spent hours creating the color scheme, rearranging the furniture to suit, deciding when they would have enough money. She had read one full year's back issues of *House Beautiful* and *American Home*. She knew what she wanted.

Enter Schmiel to survey the job. He arrived early, carrying a parcel of overalls, a bucket with his scrapers, putty knives, and spackle. When Mrs. Lewin answered the door he announced:

"The paintner is here."

This is the correct third-person approach.

Once the door was opened wide, he entered, and without further invitation or ado he walked right through to the kitchen. There he deposited his bundles, and seated himself in a chair. Again without waiting for an invitation. Why not?

"Am I a salesman? I'm a mechanic, I came to do a job, so I should be bashful?" he would have explained.

Mrs. Lewin was forced to tag after the man who was going to execute her fond plans. Having little experience with paintners she had not even assumed the traditional no-use-trying-to-do-me-in expression attempted by more sophisticated householders in addressing paintners.

Excitedly she invited Schmiel to follow her about the house, so he could see what colors she wanted in what rooms. They went upstairs and she began her "spiel."

"In this bedroom," she began, "we want a light yellow. Almost like early sunlight."

Schmiel didn't bother to look at her. He didn't even bother to shake his head sadly. He just stood in the exact center of the room and looked about at the four walls. Mrs. Lewin went on talking about the almost sunlight yellow. Schmiel just looked. When he had looked enough, he walked into the next room without saying a word. Mrs. Lewin followed.

"And this is my daughter's room," she continued. "We thought it would look just right for her in a pale pink. An ivory with a pink tinge. Do you think you can make that color?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This time Schmiel did look at her. The look was almost expressionless but it conveyed the sense of a busy man whose patience was beginning to fray a little. He said nothing.

The next room was the bathroom. Mrs. Lewin had ideas there. It was going to be gay and bright. Not just antiseptically utilitarian like most bathrooms, not violent like the new Hollywood bathrooms, but laughingly gay. Schmiel shuddered just so slightly. Now downstairs. The living room was going to be papered, said Mrs. Lewin. The *balmalocheh* stalked out into the dining room. This room was to be a soft grey. Not a blue-grey, nor a brown-grey, just a soft even-toned grey.

"And now the kitchen," Mrs. Lewin ended, "I want this room in ivory." Schmiel nodded. But she continued, "So I can put some gay decals on it and make it look Pennsylvania Dutch." That did it. The paintner sat down heavily.

First, he tried the artistic approach. Mrs. Lewin looked susceptible. "It won't look good so many colors. Such a mish-mash. How could anyone stand it? Every time you go into another room your eyes will blink. Better leave it to me. A nice ivory all over. Hah?"

Mrs. Lewin wasn't having any. He had misjudged her. She started in again listing colors and rooms. Interrupting, the paintner made his second move:

"It's going to cost you a lot of money. Every time a new color is ten dollars extra. Five rooms all different is fifty dollars more. Hah?"

Of course, here he was daringly off-base. The price had been set, and it wasn't any of his business, anyway. But he tried. Mrs. Lewin was firm. Third move.

"It's so old-fashioned, all these colors. Last week I worked by very rich people in Westchester. With high-priced decorators yet. And by them was all eggshell." He looked hopefully upward. It didn't work.

Schmiel had now used the three standard anti-color gambits. Basically Schmiel was not dull or mono-color minded. He enjoyed Christmas ties. But color was a nuisance and anyway not within a layman's province.

But, unfortunately, Schmiel had no opening for standard argument number four. This one is reserved for a customer who asks for something new. A paintner's definition of new is within the last twenty years. This argument goes like this: "There isn't any such thing." And if confronted with printed proof, the next move is: "It's just in the advertisements, it's not on the market yet.

To Schmiel's and the trade's sorrow, Mrs. Lewin won the argument and got her way. But before the four days were over there must have been many an hour during which she wondered whether it was worth it, whether anything was worth it. Schmiel had many resources.

ANOTHER of the paintner's gripes — inevitably let out on the customer—is that he cannot leave his tools in the shop. That *schvere-arbeiter* the plumber, called upon only in emergencies, has developed a method for making customers pay for their temerity. He leaves his tools in the shop. He does carry a bag of tools, but the one necessary for this particular job is in the shop. The paintner is caught by fate. The boss delivers the paint, ladders, and brushes. These materials are ample for the work. And that means seven hours of work for seven hours on the job. It's not right.

To counter this wrong, the paintner has developed several time-wasting techniques. For example, the "you got a rag?" angle. Technically there is no reason in the world why the householder should supply rags to the paintner. He is supposed to leave her premises broom-clean and without spots. But the lady of the house knows that it doesn't pay to take chances. When the paintner says, "You got a rag I should wipe up the spots?" she starts tearing sheets, shirts, and dresses. Usually they are sheets, shirts, and dresses she is still not sure she can spare. Meanwhile the paintner examines the pictures on the wall with a jaundiced eye. Every day he needs more rags.

Another technique involves coffee. Let the slightest aroma of coffee rise through the house and the paintner appears in the kitchen for a drink of water or a question about some room. There he will hover about, sniffing. Each sniff will seem to exhaust the air from the room. The rest is always automatic.

If the lady of the house is not a between-meals coffee drinker the paintner will broach the subject delicately. "Hummah," he'll

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say, "I thought I smelled coffee." Usually she gets the idea.

For recalcitrant housewives, there are several "get-even" techniques. One is a subtle method of making fun of the customer, known in the trade as *macht choizik*.

I once sat entranced while the same Schmiel exercised his techniques on a lady who had insisted on a peach ceiling. He would put a drop of color into the paint pot, mix it, dip his brush, and climb laboriously up the ladder to take one swipe at the ceiling. Then he would climb down, go to his lunchbox, take out a peach, climb back up with the fruit and compare the ceiling color with the real thing. After some hours of this the woman fled her house for the movies.

A historic crisis in householder-paintner relations was precipitated in New York by the New School for Social Research, some years ago. The architecture and interior painting of the New School building on 12th street were advanced. Classrooms were painted with walls and even sections of walls in different colors. Theoretically this method of painting was calculated to even the light throughout the room, eliminate glare, rest the eyes, and focus attention on the lecturer. Maybe it was fine for the New School. But a lot of apartment dwellers got ideas.

The paintner, as a creature of tradition, resists change. But this idea of two walls of different colors was more than change—it was revolution. So the paintners rallied for the counter-attack; they used all the old methods and some new ones. And today they have routed the enemy. At any rate, two color rooms aren't as popular as they once were.

During this battle the paintner made telling use of a new ally, a part of his equipment that heretofore he had looked upon as an inanimate enemy—the dustcloth. The dustcloth is the canvas affair to cover the furniture and floors to prevent spotting.

Now a dustcloth looks inanimate, but it has an animate malignancy. Householders do not believe this but I have seen it with my own eyes. These great squares of cotton can develop feet and crawl. A new, whole dust cloth can instantaneously open its fibers and let a paint spot through onto the piano it is supposed to be protecting—and close up and look whole again. The paintner carefully covers floors and furniture with dustcloths. He paints, and then he lifts the cloth, and there under the cloth he finds spots, dried hard. One more thorn in the paintner's side. But in the New School imbroglio it was the secret weapon in the paintners' arsenal. I recall the case of the West End Avenue lady who had some lovely new Swedish modern white birch furniture, and for the walls of her living room she wanted nothing less than moss green and Algerian beige. . . .

Most paintners have wives (and live in apartments that badly need painting), but no tribe of men dislike women more. For that, by and large, women must bear the blame. Why do female householders assume that men working about the house are half-blind—or rather blind to half they see? A woman who normally would redden with shame if she knew that her slip were showing will walk about the house half undressed, oblivious to the painter.

Gas meter readers, either because they work for a major utility or because of special training, can walk into an apartment in the early morning with their eyes fixed on a point near the ceiling. They can read the meter and walk out of the house without even having seen the woman of the place clumping about in her nightgown. Paintners cannot do this. It bothers them. A strict morality goes along with the rest of their conservatism. To make matters worse for them there are the "matchers," the women whose sense of color is so literal that they can only visualize what they have right at hand. This one comes up to the paintner and, grabbing the front of her shocking pink peignoir, shoves it in his face.

"Here," she says, "make me this color in the bedroom." It is frightening. ("Lady," ends one of the many rueful paintners' jokes on this theme, "I am an old man.")

From this paintner trouble comes another and—from the householder's point of view—worse trouble. The artist, averting his eyes from the deshabille, makes mistakes. For example, he paints over things. It is sad but true that, if not closely watched, the *balmalocheh* will paint over the door hardware, any wall lighting fixtures, and an occasional piece of furniture too heavy to move. But it's not his fault.

To counteract this and other forces work-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to undermine their craftsmanship and probity, paintners often work in pairs. Working as a team, the two mechanics carry on a running conversation, usually about their customer. It is *de rigueur* that the householder be always spoken of in the formal third person, even though he may be standing right beside them. When the customer addresses them, one paintner always paraphrases what the householder said to the other painter, using the third person, of course.

Two paintners are working on the window sashes of a living room. The man of the house is sitting in an armchair, reading a book. Suddenly a large splash of ivory enamel appears on a pair of grey kid gloves carelessly left by the customer on a window side table.

"Schlemiel," says paintner No. 1, "look what you've done to the man's gloves."

"So it happened an accident," No. 2 answers, "a little turp and it'll come out. Don't get excited."

He climbs down from the ladder and attacks the spot with a paint-dirty rag and some turpentine. The owner of the gloves sits mesmerized. The conversation continues.

"A nice pair gloves, soft like butter. But not a paintner's color. Gloves like this you don't find on a paintner. It must be a fine man, an artist, maybe a writer, to wear such gloves in the middle of the week."

Paintner No. 1 by now has stopped working and is watching the proceedings with great care from his high perch.

"Be a little careful, you *yold* you," he says, "a five-six dollar pair gloves you'll ruin for the man yet."

Eventually the spotted glove is put aside to dry. To be sure, it doesn't look perfectly clean, but No. 2 explains to his partner that only a snob and an aristocrat could be dissatisfied.

"And this glove he doesn't use anyway. He has to take out a cigarette, or maybe a nickel for the subway. How can he wear a glove on the right hand. In the pocket it can have a little spot," he adds.

That's the way it goes. You think you have troubles? Ask any paintner, he'll really tell you.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CEDARS OF LEBANON

A SPEECH ON JEWISH EMANCIPATION

Delivered Before the House of Commons, April 17, 1833

LORD MACAULAY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY (1800-1859), English statesman, historian, and essayist, was among the most active supporters of Jewish emancipation in England. His maiden speech in Parliament, on April 5, 1830, was in support of Sir Robert Grant's Bill for the Removal of Jewish Disabilities, and the following year, after the defeat of this bill, he contributed a brilliant essay to the *Edinburgh Review* entitled "Civil Disabilities of the Jews." This essay was for years regarded as the leading statement of the case for Jewish emancipation and was widely reprinted and translated. One German translation of the essay appeared in 1881, in reply to the anti-Semitic campaign of Stoecker and Henrici.

The speech reprinted below was delivered April 17, 1833, when Grant's bill was resubmitted as a resolution to a Committee of the Whole House of Commons, with Henry Warburton as chairman. The resolution read as follows: "That is is the opinion of this Committee that it is expedient to remove all civil disabilities at present existing with respect to His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion, with the like exceptions as are provided with respect to His Majesty's subjects professing the Roman Catholic religion." The resolution was passed, but it was not until 1860 that the victory was finally won.

The Member for the University of Oxford, at whom Macaulay directs many of his arguments, was Sir Robert Inglis (1786-1855), a stubborn opponent of Jewish emancipation.—ED.

MR. WARBURTON, – I recollect, and my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford will recollect, that when this subject was discussed three years ago, it was remarked, by one whom we both loved and whom we both regret, that the strength of the case of the Jews was a serious inconvenience to their advocate, for that it was hardly possible to make a speech for them without wearying the audience by repeating the truths which were universally admitted. If Sir James Mackintosh felt this difficulty when the question was first brought forward in this House, I may well despair of being able now to offer any arguments which have a pretence to novelty.

My honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, began his speech by declaring that he had no intention of calling in question the principles of religious liberty. He utterly disclaims persecution, that is to say, persecution as defined by himself. It would, in his opinion, be persecution to hang a Jew, or to flay him, or to draw his teeth, or to imprison him, or to fine him; for every man who conducts himself peaceably has a right to his life and his limbs, to his personal liberty and his property. But it is not persecution, says my honourable friend, to exclude any individual or any class from office; for nobody has a right to office: in every country official appointments must be subject to such regulations as the supreme authority may choose to make; nor can any such regulations be reasonably complained of by any member of the society as unjust. He who obtains an office obtains it, not as matter of right, but as matter of favour. He who does not obtain an office is not wronged; he is only in that situation in which the vast majority of every community

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must necessarily be. There are in the United Kingdom five and twenty million Christians without places; and, if they do not complain, why should five and twenty thousand Jews complain of being in the same case? In this way my honourable friend has convinced himself that, as it would be most absurd in him and me to say that we are wronged because we are not Secretaries of State, so it is most absurd in the Jews to say that they are wronged because they are, as a people, excluded from public employment.

Now, surely my honourable friend cannot have considered to what conclusions his reasoning leads. Those conclusions are so monstrous that he would, I am certain, shrink from them. Does he really mean that it would not be wrong in the legislature to enact that no man should be a judge unless he weighed twelve stone, or that no man should sit in Parliament unless he were six feet high? We are about to bring in a bill for the government of India. Suppose that we were to insert in that bill a clause providing that no graduate of the University of Oxford should be Governor-General or Governor of any Presidency, would not my honourable friend cry out against such a clause as most unjust to the learned body which he represents? And would he think himself sufficiently answered by being told, in his own words, that the appointment to office is a mere matter of favour, and that to exclude an individual or a class from office is no injury? Surely, on consideration, he must admit that official appointments ought not to be subject to regulations purely arbitrary, to regulations for which no reason can be given but mere caprice, and that those who would exclude any class from public employment are bound to show some special reason for the exclusion.

My honourable friend has appealed to us as Christians. Let me then ask him how he understands that great commandment which comprises the law and the prophets. Can we be said to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us if we wantonly inflict on them even the smallest pain? As Christians, surely we are bound to consider, first, whether, by excluding the Jews from all public trust, we give them pain; and, secondly, whether it be necessary to give them that pain in order to avert some greater evil. That by excluding them from public trust we inflict pain on them my honourable friend will not dispute. As a Christian, therefore, he is bound to relieve them from that pain, unless he can show, what I am sure he has not yet shown, that it is necessary to the general good that they should continue to suffer.

But where, he says, are you to stop, if once you admit into the House of Commons people who deny the authority of the Gospels? Will you let in a Mussulman? Will you let in a Parsee? Will you let in a Hindoo, who worships a lump of stone with seven heads? I will answer my honourable friend's question by another. Where does he mean to stop? Is he ready to roast unbelievers at slow fires? If not, let him tell us why: and I will engage to prove that his reason is just as decisive against the intolerance which he thinks a duty, as against the intolerance which he thinks a crime. Once admit that we are bound to inflict pain on a man because he is not of our religion; and where are you to stop? Why stop at the point fixed by my honourable friend rather than at the point fixed by the honourable Member for Oldham,* who would make the Jews incapable of holding land? And why stop at the point fixed by the honourable Member for Oldham rather than at the point which would have been fixed by a Spanish Inquisitor of the sixteenth century? When once you enter on a course of persecution, I defy you to find any reason for making a halt till you have reached the extreme point. When my honourable friend tells us that he will allow the Jews to possess property to any amount, but that he will not allow them to possess the smallest political power, he holds contradictory language. Property is power. The honourable Member for Oldham sees very clearly that it is impossible to deprive a man of political power if you suffer him to be the proprietor of half a county, and therefore very consistently proposes to confiscate the landed estates of the Jews.

But even the honourable Member for Oldham does not go far enough. He has

* The Member for Oldham was the noted William Cobbet (1762-1835), who, after an extraordinary career in England and America, entered the first Reformed Parliament. Cobbet was very violent in his opposition to Jewish liberties.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not proposed to confiscate the personal property of the Jews. Yet it is perfectly certain that any Jew who has a million may easily make himself very important in the state. By such steps we pass from official power to landed property, and from landed property to personal property, and from property to liberty, and from liberty to life. In truth, those persecutors who use the rack and the stake have much to say for themselves. They are convinced that their end is good; and it must be admitted that they employ means which are not unlikely to attain the end. Religious dissent has repeatedly been put down by sanguinary persecution. In that way the Albigenses were put down. In that way Protestantism was suppressed in Spain and Italy, so that it has never since reared its head. But I defy anybody to produce an instance in which disabilities such as we are now considering have produced any other effect than that of making the sufferers angry and obstinate. My honourable friend should either persecute to some purpose, or not persecute at all.

He dislikes the word persecution, I know. He will not admit that the Jews are persecuted. And yet I am confident that he would rather be sent to the King's Bench Prison for three months, or be fined a hundred pounds, than be subject to the disabilities under which the Jews lie. How can he then say that to impose such disabilities is not persecution and that to fine and imprison is persecution? All his reasoning consists in drawing arbitrary lines. What he does not wish to inflict he calls persecution. What he does wish to inflict he will not call persecution. What he takes from the Jews he calls political power. What he is too good-natured to take from the Jews he will not call political power. The Jew must not sit in Parliament: but he may be the proprietor of all the ten-pound houses in a borough. He may have more fifty-pound tenants than any peer in the kingdom. He may give the voters treats to please their palates, and hire bands of gipsies to break their heads, as if he were a Christian and a Marquess.

All the rest of the system is of a piece. The Jew may be a juryman, but not a judge. He may decide issues of fact, but not issues of law. He may give a hundred thousand pounds damages; but he may not in the most trivial case grant a new trial. He may rule the money-market: he may influence the exchanges: he may be summoned to congresses of Emperors and Kings. Great potentates, instead of negotiating a loan with him by tying him in a chair and pulling out his grinders, may treat with him as with a great potentate, and may postpone the declaring of war or the signing of a treaty till they have conferred with him. All this is as it should be: but he must not be a Privy Councillor. He must not be called Right Honourable, for that is political power.

And who is it that we are trying to cheat in this way? Even Omniscience. Yes, Sir; we have been gravely told that the Jews are under the divine displeasure, and that if we give them political power, God will visit us in judgment. Do we then think that God cannot distinguish between substance and form? Does not He know that, while we withhold from the Jews the semblance and name of political power, we suffer them to possess the substance? The plain truth is that my honourable friend is drawn in one direction by his opinions, and in a directly opposite direction by his excellent heart. He halts between two opinions. He tries to make a compromise between principles which admit of no compromise. He goes a certain way in intolerance. Then he stops, without being able to give a reason for stopping. But I know the reason. It is his humanity. Those who formerly dragged the Jew at a horse's tail, and singed his beard with blazing furze-bushes, were much worse men than my honourable friend; but they were more consistent than he.

It has been said that it would be monstrous to see a Jew judge try a man for blasphemy. In my opinion it is monstrous to see any judge try a man for blasphemy under the present law. But, if the law on that subject were in a sound state, I do not see why a conscientious Jew might not try a blasphemer. Every man, I think, ought to be at liberty to discuss the evidences of religion; but no man ought to be at liberty to force on the unwilling ears and eyes of others sounds and sights which must cause annoyance and irritation. The distinction is clear. I think it wrong to punish a man for selling Paine's *Age of Reason* in a back-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shop to those who choose to buy, or for delivering a Deistical lecture in a private room to those who choose to listen. But if a man exhibits at a window in the Strand a hideous caricature of that which is an object of awe and adoration to nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the people who pass up and down that great thoroughfare; if a man in a place of public resort applies opprobrious epithets to names held in reverence by all Christians; such a man ought, in my opinion, to be severely punished, not for differing from us in opinion, but for committing a nuisance which gives us pain and disgust. He is no more entitled to outrage our feelings by obtruding his impiety on us, and to say that he is exercising his right of discussion, than to establish a yard for butchering horses close to our houses, and to say that he is exercising his right of property, or to run naked up and down the public streets, and to say that he is exercising his right of locomotion. But he must use all his rights so as not to infringe the rights of others.

These, Sir, are the principles on which I would frame the law of blasphemy; and if the law were so framed, I am at a loss to understand why a Jew might not enforce it as well as a Christian. I am not a Roman Catholic; but if I were a judge at Malta, I should have no scruple about punishing a bigoted Protestant who should burn the Pope in effigy before the eyes of thousands of Roman Catholics. I am not a Mussulman; but if I were a judge in India, I should have no scruple about punishing a Christian who should pollute a mosque. Why, then, should I doubt that a Jew, raised by his ability, learning, and integrity to the judicial bench, would deal properly with any person who, in a Christian country, should insult the Christian religion?

But, says my honourable friend, it has been prophesied that the Jews are to be wanderers on the face of the earth, and that they are not to mix on terms of equality with the people of the countries in which they sojourn. Now, Sir, I am confident that I can demonstrate that this is not the sense of any prophecy which is part of Holy Writ. For it is an undoubted fact that, in the United States of America, Jewish citizens do possess all the privileges possessed by Christian citizens. Therefore, if the prophecies mean that the Jews never shall, during their wanderings, be admitted by other nations to equal participation of political rights, the prophecies are false. Therefore their meaning cannot be that which is attributed to them by my honourable friend.

Another objection which has been made to the motion is that the Jews look forward to the coming of a great deliverer, to their return to Palestine, to the rebuilding of their Temple, to the revival of their ancient worship, and that therefore they will always consider England, not their country, but merely as their place of exile. But, surely, Sir, it would be the grossest ignorance of human nature to imagine that the anticipation of an event which is to happen at some time altogether indefinite, of an event which has been vainly expected during many centuries, of an event which even those who confidently expect that it will happen do not confidently expect that they or their children or their grandchildren will see, can ever occupy the minds of men to such a degree as to make them regardless of what is near and present and certain. Indeed Christians, as well as Jews, believe that the existing order of things will come to an end. Many Christians believe that Jesus will visibly reign on earth during a thousand years. Expositors of prophecy have gone so far as to fix the year when the Millennial period is to commence. The prevailing opinion is, I think, in favour of the year 1866; but according to some commentators, the time is close at hand. Are we to exclude all Millenarians from Parliament and office, on the ground that they are impatiently looking forward to the miraculous monarchy which is to supersede the present dynasty and the present constitution of England, and that therefore they cannot be heartily loyal to King William?

In one important point, Sir, my honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, must acknowledge that the Jewish religion is of all erroneous religions the least mischievous. There is not the slightest chance that the Jewish religion will spread. The Jew does not wish to make proselytes. He may be said to reject them. He thinks it almost culpable in one who does not belong to his race to presume to belong to his religion. It is therefore not strange that a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conversion from Christianity to Judaism should be a rarer occurrence than a total eclipse of the sun.

THERE was one distinguished convert in the last century, Lord George Gordon; and the history of his conversion deserves to be remembered. For if ever there was a proselyte of whom a proselytising sect would have been proud, it was Lord George; not only because he was a man of high birth and rank; not only because he had been a member of the legislature; but also because he had been distinguished by the intolerance, nay, the ferocity, of his zeal for his own form of Christianity. But was he allured into the synagogue? Was he even welcomed to it? No, Sir; he was coldly and reluctantly permitted to share the reproach and suffering of the chosen people; but he was sternly shut out from their privileges. He underwent the painful rite which their law enjoins. But when, on his death-bed, he begged hard to be buried among them according to their ceremonial, he was told that his request could not be granted. I understand that cry of "Hear." It reminds me that one of the arguments against this motion is that the Jews are an unsocial people, that they draw close to each other, and stand aloof from strangers. Really, Sir, it is amusing to compare the manner in which the question of Catholic emancipation was argued formerly by some gentlemen with the manner in which the question of Jew emancipation is argued by the same gentlemen now. When the question was about Catholic emancipation, the cry was, "See how restless, how versatile, how encroaching, how insinuating, is the spirit of the Church of Rome. See how her priests compass earth and sea to make one proselyte, how indefatigably they toil, how attentively they study the weak and strong parts of every character, how skillfully they employ literature, arts, sciences, as engines for the propagation of their faith. You find them in every region and under every disguise, collating manuscripts in the Bodleian, fixing telescopes in the observatory of Pekin, teaching the use of the plough and the spinning wheel to the savages of Paraguay. Will you give power to the members of a Church so busy, so aggressive, so insatiable?" Well, now the question is about people who never try to seduce any stranger to join them, and who do not wish anybody to be of their faith who is not also of their blood. And now you exclaim, "Will you give power to the members of a sect which remains sullenly apart from other sects, which does not invite, nay, which hardly even admits neophytes?"

The truth is, that bigotry will never want a pretence. Whatever the sect be which it is proposed to tolerate, the peculiarities of that sect will, for the time, be pronounced by intolerant men to be the most odious and dangerous that can be conceived. As to the Jews, that they are unsocial as respects religion is true; and so much the better: for, surely, as Christians, we cannot wish that they should bestir themselves to pervert us from our own faith. But that the Jews would be unsocial members of the civil community, if the civil community did its duty by them, has never been proved. My right honourable friend who made the motion which we are discussing has produced a great body of evidence to show that they have been grossly misrepresented;* and that evidence has not been refuted by my

---

* In the report of Grant's speech in the *Times* of April 18, 1833, occurs this passage:—

"Now with respect to the supposed anti-social principles of the Jews, the most sacred of their books had told them to 'Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace' [Jeremiah xxix 7]. This principle was fully recognised by the Jews under Napoleon, who asked whether they held themselves bound, as citizens of the State in which they resided, by the laws and customs of that State? The Sanhedrin replied that every Jew, regarded as a citizen by the State, must obey the laws of the country which protected them and conform to the regulations of the civil code; in short, that Israelites were bound to consider such countries as their own, and serve and defend them to the utmost. In a catechism of the elements of the Jewish faith, intended for the use of Hebrew youths, it was stated that the Messiah not having come, the king under whose protection they lived must be considered as a King of Israel, and that the country in which they enjoyed such protection was to be looked upon in the same light as the land of their forefathers."

Grant followed this up by a masterly survey of the relations of Jews to various States in the past and present, and cited evidence of the patriotism and good citizenship of Jews wherever they had been permitted an opportunity of displaying those qualities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford.

But what if it were true that the Jews are unsocial? What if it were true that they do not regard England as their country? Would not the treatment which they have undergone explain and excuse their antipathy to the society in which they live? Has not similar antipathy often been felt by persecuted Christians to the society which persecuted them? While the bloody code of Elizabeth was enforced against the English Roman Catholics, what was the patriotism of Roman Catholics? Oliver Cromwell said that in his time they were Espaniolised. At a later period it might have been said that they were Gallicised. It was the same with the Calvinists. What more deadly enemies had France in the days of Louis the Fourteenth than the persecuted Huguenots? But would any rational man infer from these facts that either the Roman Catholic as such, or the Calvinist as such, is incapable of loving the land of his birth? If England were now invaded by Roman Catholics, how many English Roman Catholics would go over to the invader? If France were now attacked by a Protestant enemy, how many French Protestants would lend him help? Why not try what effect would be produced on the Jews by that tolerant policy which has made the English Roman Catholic a good Englishman and the French Calvinist a good Frenchman?*

ANOTHER charge has been brought against the Jews, not by my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford—he has too much learning and too much good feeling to make such a charge—but by the honourable Member for Oldham, who has, I am sorry to see, quitted his place. The honourable Member for Oldham tells us that the Jews are naturally a mean race, a sordid race, a money-getting race; that they are averse to all honourable callings; that they neither sow nor reap; that they have neither flocks nor herds; that usury is the only pursuit for which they are fit; that they are destitute of all elevated and amiable sentiments.

Such, Sir, has in every age been the reasoning of bigots. They never fail to plead in justification of persecution the vices which persecution has engendered. England has been to the Jews less than half a country; and we revile them because they do not feel for England more than a half patriotism. We treat them as slaves, and wonder that they do not regard us as brethren. We drive them to mean occupations, and then reproach them for not embracing honourable professions. We long forbade them to possess land; and we complain that they chiefly occupy themselves in trade. We shut them out from all the paths of ambition; and then we despise them for taking refuge in avarice. During many ages we have, in all our dealings with them, abused our immense superiority of force; and then we are disgusted because they have recourse to that cunning which is the natural and universal defence of the weak against the violence of the strong.

But were they always a mere money-changing, money-getting, money-hoarding race? Nobody knows better than my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford that there is nothing in their national character which unfits them for the highest duties of citizens. He knows that, in the infancy of civilisation, when our island was as savage as New Guinea, when letters and arts were still unknown to Athens, when scarcely a thatched hut stood on what was afterwards the site of Rome, this condemned people had their fenced cities and cedar palaces, their spendid Temple, their fleets of merchant ships, their schools of sacred learning, their great statesmen and soldiers, their natural philosophers, their historians and their poets. What nation ever contended more manfully against overwhelming odds for its independence and religion? What nation ever, in its last agonies, gave such signal proofs of what may be accomplished by a brave despair? And if, in

*In Hansard's report (col. 236) Macaulay finished the paragraph with the words: "Why not try the same experiment which has been tried in France and Prussia, and which was now trying in the United States of America?" In the same debate (col. 242), in the report of Mr. Joseph Hume's speech, occurs the passage: "He had a letter in his hand, though he would not trouble the House by reading it, from Mr. Quincy Adams, the late President of the United States, stating that there were not better citizens than the Jews, and expressing the hope that ere long the whole of Europe would see the justice and wisdom of freely conceding to them the fullest political privileges."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the course of many centuries, the oppressed descendants of warriors and sages have degenerated from the qualities of their fathers, if, while excluded from the blessings of law, and bowed under the yoke of slavery, they have contracted some of the vices of outlaws and of slaves, shall we consider this as matter of reproach to them? Shall we not rather consider it as matter of shame and remorse to ourselves?

Let us do justice to them. Let us open to them the door of the House of Commons. Let us open to them every career in which ability and energy can be displayed. Till we have done this, let us not presume to say that there is no genius among the countrymen of Isaiah, no heroism among the descendants of the Maccabees.

Sir, in supporting the motion of my honourable friend, I am, I firmly believe, supporting the honour and the interests of the Christian religion. I should think that I insulted that religion if I said that it cannot stand unaided by intolerant laws. Without such laws it was established, and without such laws it may be maintained. It triumphed over the superstitions of the most refined and of the most savage nations, over the graceful mythology of Greece and the bloody idolatry of the Northern forests. It prevailed over the power and policy of the Roman empire. It tamed the barbarians by whom that empire was overthrown. But all these victories were gained not by the help of intolerance, but in spite of the opposition of intolerance.

The whole history of Christianity proves that she has little indeed to fear from persecution as a foe, but much to fear from persecution as an ally. May she long continue to bless our country with her benignant influence, strong in her sublime philosophy, strong in her spotless morality, strong in those internal and external evidences to which the most powerful and comprehensive of human intellects have yielded assent, the last solace of those who have outlived every earthly hope, the last restraint of those who are raised above every earthly fear! But let not us, mistaking her character and her interests, fight the battle of truth with the weapons of error, and endeavor to support by oppression that religion which first taught the human race the great lesson of universal charity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE STUDY OF MAN

THE COMPLEX BEHIND HITLER'S ANTI-SEMITISM

A Psychoanalytic Study in History

GERTRUD M. KURTH

FOR hours," says Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, "the black-haired Jew boy, diabolic joy in his face, waits in ambush for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood. . . ."

Most Hitler biographers and students of racial bias, in their quest for the origins and real nature of the Fuehrer's peculiar brand of anti-Semitism, have come to feel that the answer lies hidden in this notorious passage. The most widely accepted interpretation is that of a kind of semi-deliberate turnabout, a change of roles, as it were. As Rudolf Olden, one of Hitler's most conscientious biographers, puts it: "Was it perhaps someone else, dark-haired too, but Aryan, who 'for hours lay in wait,' while the girl he awaited in vain went off 'unsuspectingly' with a Jewish rival?"

A tempting surmise, but a far too superficial one. And from what is known of Hitler's life there is not a shred of evidence to support it. One must delve into deeper layers of his mind if one hopes to unravel the meaning of this obviously pathological fantasy.

"The anti-Semitic attitude," says Ernst Simmel in the introduction to *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease*, "obeys an irrational trend. . . . Freud, through the psychoanalytic method, discovered the natural laws governing the *irrational* trends in men. . . ."

The present analysis is an attempt to apply psychoanalytic methods to some of the Fuehrer's biographical data in an effort to get behind the "black-haired Jew boy" and thus clarify the origins of Hitler's all pervading and implacable anti-Semitism. The result will of necessity be somewhat conjectural—though considerably less so than the reader might suspect.

IN THE autobiographical sections of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler himself has established beyond doubt the time and place of the outbreak of his race hatred: "At home," he says, "as long as my father lived, I cannot remember that I ever heard the word [Jew]." He also professes to have been ignorant of the existence of "organized hostility" toward Jews before he came to Vienna. The correctness of both these statements can be proved in a sense more subtle than the writer himself was aware of.

The Fuehrer's father was a typical, though fairly broad-minded, Austrian civil servant. At the time of his retirement on pension in 1895—when he moved his family (including two children by a former marriage) to a village near Linz, the capital of Upper Austria—Alois Hitler held the position of a customs official, which he had attained after many years of hard work. His greatest ambition for his youngest

---

PSYCHOANALYSIS has in recent years greatly influenced thinking in such fields as anthropology and sociology; here is an example of its use in the writing of history. GERTRUD M. KURTH is editor-in-chief of International Universities Press, a firm specializing in the publication of books on psychoanalysis. During the war, Dr. Kurth worked in psychological research for the Office of Strategic Services. She has written for various scientific and general periodicals, and has just completed a book on the "image" of Adolf Hitler as it was developed in Nazi propaganda. Dr. Kurth is a native of Vienna and earned her doctorate (in anthropology) at the University of Vienna. The present article embodies, in less technical form, material used in an article by Dr. Kurth that appeared in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Volume XVI, number 1, 1947.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son—the only one to survive of his third marriage—was to make a civil servant out of him. This ambition was thwarted, not only because his son, despite admitted "fear" of his father, stubbornly clung to his own hopes of becoming a painter, but probably also because his resistance was somehow supported by the mother, reciprocating her son's unconditional love.

Hitler's means of combating his father's aims consisted in deliberately failing at school. While his reports from various public schools had hitherto been mostly "excellent," from 1900 on he only learned what he "liked" in secondary school, "sabotaging" the rest. In 1903, the height of this "war" between father and son, the old man suddenly succumbed to pulmonary hemorrhage. A weak and doting mother was left who was unable to cope with her son's mulish determination. He failed at school and thereafter spent the best part of four years at home, doing virtually nothing except for some fooling around with pencils, brushes, and paints. He took two trips to Vienna, in 1907 and 1908, to seek admittance to the Academy of Arts there, but was rejected both times. His mother died shortly before Christmas 1908, and at the beginning of 1909, that is, at the age of twenty, Adolf returned to Vienna, where he spent the following four years, certainly the hardest of his life.

What little money he had was soon spent and he sank into utter destitution. A cot in a flophouse must have seemed comfortable after several nights spent on park benches. He ate soup at a cloister, or what his companions-in-misery gave him out of the goodness of their hearts. He made his living any odd way, shoveling snow, carrying luggage at railroad stations, and allegedly by work on construction jobs. Only after another flophouse inhabitant, Reinhold Hanisch, had persuaded him to paint picture postcards and posters, which Hanisch then peddled around, did his lot improve somewhat. Finally, in May 1913, Hitler left Vienna for Munich; there, on the outbreak of war in August 1914, he enlisted in the German army.

It was during those fateful four years in Vienna that Adolf Hitler became a conscious and violent anti-Semite. There, "organized hostility" toward the Jews could hardly escape notice. The Vienna of those days was under the domination of the Christian Social party, whose leader, the then mayor of Vienna, Dr. Karl Lueger, was a rabid anti-Semite. (That this anti-Semitism was religious and not yet racial has no immediate bearing upon our problem.) Hitler was a great admirer of Dr. Lueger and he also seems to have become a voracious reader of the Christian Social party's anti-Semitic propaganda and of the writers this propaganda brought to his attention—Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and the like. All this must have contributed to the full flowering of his prejudice.

Yet if one reads *Mein Kampf* attentively, the impression that Hitler's anti-Semitism was of "unmistakably sexual origin" (as Rudolf Olden expressed it) forces its way upon one. "In no other city," says Hitler—and that was what he believed decided his stand—"could the relationship between Jewry and prostitution, and even now the white-slave traffic, be studied better than in Vienna. . . . *An icy shudder ran down my spine* when seeing the Jew for the first time as a cool, shameless, and calculating manager of this shocking vice. . . . *But then my indignation flared up.*"

And while Hitler dwells at great length upon all the other Jewish "crimes"—in politics, economy, and culture—never does he become so emotional, arbitrary, and absurd as when he discusses his absolute and overwhelming horror of *sex relations* between Jews and Germans. He persistently calls the Jews "the seducers of our people," and equates *"Rassenschande"* (racial sin) with venereal disease: both lead to "blood poisoning." For: *"The sin against the blood and the degradation of the race are the hereditary sin of this world."* It is for the purpose of "unveiling" interracial sexual relations as a subtle and devilish plan on the part of "World Jewry" to undermine the racial vigor of other peoples that Hitler writes about his "black-haired Jew boy." In the end we are asked to believe that it was his witnessing of such shocking occurrences that caused the Fuehrer to leave Vienna: "I detested the conglomerate of races that the . . . capital manifested . . . among them . . . Jews and more Jews. To me the big city appeared as *the personification of incest.*"

Here is the key clue, and although Olden sensed the "undeniable, unmistakable connection" between the fantasy about the "black-haired Jew boy" and incest, he failed to integrate this connection in his interpretation.

THE term "incest" strikes a familiar chord for anyone acquainted with relations in the Hitler family; these were, to quote Konrad

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Heiden, "so restricted as to border on incest . . . the degree of which can only be surmised." The blood relation between father and mother was so close as to require an episcopal dispensation for their marriage. Since Hitler's father had himself been an illegitimate child (and had borne his mother's maiden name of Schicklgruber till late in life), one is in doubt as to his paternity, and it is therefore uncertain whether Klara Hitler, twenty-three years her husband's junior, was his second cousin or his niece.

When on top of this we discover an almost identical "incestuous" relationship on the part of the younger Hitler himself, the significance of the "incest" motif in his life is doubly underlined.

We know of only one great and passionate love affair in Hitler's life. The heroine—a beautiful, buxom blonde, almost twenty years his junior—was his niece, Geli (Angela) Raubal, the daughter of his (then) widowed half-sister Angela. This love affair took place in the late 20's, when Hitler had settled down to a more or less bourgeois life in Munich and on the Obersalzberg, where his half-sister (from his father's second marriage) kept house for him. For a while "Uncle Alf" and Geli—who shared the apartment—were expected to get married. But the romance ended in tragedy when Geli, on the eve of her clandestine departure for Vienna—a step she had probably decided upon because of the steady deterioration of her relations with Hitler—was killed by a bullet. It has remained uncertain to this day whether her death was suicide or murder. In any case, Hitler was brokenhearted. And the fact that the girl's bereaved mother stayed with him for many more years seems to absolve him of any direct responsibility for the girl's death.

Here, then, we have a situation that corresponds strangely to that which is presented as the climax of Jewish depravity in *Mein Kampf*: a "dark-haired" man, "defiling incestuously" a blonde girl; presumably, the element of "diabolic joy" was not absent either. It may be objected that all this happened years after the publication of *Mein Kampf*. But this objection only indicates the necessity for pursuing the search for the real identity of the "black-haired Jew boy."

DISPLACEMENT of affection from mother to daughter is an old motif in literature, popular because it reflects a well-known human tendency. Turning, on this assumption, to Hitler's relations with his half-sister Angela, one is not surprised to find that they offer certain remarkable features. Very little is known of the Fuehrer's relations with his half-brother Alois and his only full sister, Paula. From the very lack of data it may be inferred that their relations were cool, if not hostile. But it was quite different with Angela, before the time when she was called upon to share his life, also.

The evidence takes us back to Vienna, to the time when Hitler and his friend Hanisch were planning their business association, with Hitler as the producer and Hanisch as the salesman of picture postcards and posters. The two lacked even the small funds necessary to start the enterprise by buying materials. Hanisch discovered at this point that Hitler, shortly before coming to Vienna, had signed over his share in his father's estate—an income of seventeen kronen monthly—to his half-sister—who "was just married and needed the money." Though Hitler neither immediately before nor for many years after this time kept in touch with his family, Hanisch succeeded in persuading him this once to turn to his half-sister, who actually sent him fifty kronen promptly; with this little capital the two vagrants started what turned out a fairly successful venture.

One has to picture fully Hitler's situation at this time in order to realize how odd and illogical an act is uncovered here. Harried by hunger, cold, and hopelessness, he was on his way to the depths at a rapid pace. His share of his father's estate (actually, the interest on the small capital yielded by the sale of the older Hitler's home), small as it was, would have provided a monthly income in solid gold kronen that would have made all the difference between complete misery and moderate comfort. Yet he not only renounced what was his due, he almost threw it at his sister, who, from all that is known, was in no dire need of support and certainly much less so than Adolf himself. Nor was financial munificence a habit with the Fuehrer. At a later time, when he was fairly well off and his sister Paula was in very straitened circumstances, she was hardly able to secure even modest support from him. Thus his generosity toward Angela seems all the more surprising.

Yet, there can be no doubt of the truth of the matter. All investigations have confirmed it. Contemporaries and biographers appear equally puzzled. Psychoanalysis, however, will look for the unconscious motives of an irra-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional act. Keeping in mind the fact that Hitler's gift to his sister shortly preceded the outbreak of his boundless hatred for the "incestuous" Jew, we here venture the guess that the gift may have signalized the operation of some violent—though naturally unconscious—feeling of guilt for which this generosity was an expiation. We may wonder whether Adolf Hitler himself had ever harbored a strong—unconscious—"incestuous" desire for this very sister whose daughter later affected him so strongly.

ALMOST every relationship between brother and sister retains throughout life faint traces of the infantile incestuous desires that tinge it in early childhood. However, only in rare instances will these drives, in later life, exert such considerable pressure out of their hiding places in the unconscious. Our quest will therefore have to be directed to the specific nature of the relation beween Adolf and Angela Hitler, and to the reasons for its intensity and persistence.

In reconstructing the early domestic scene in the Hitler household, a picture emerges that seems to reveal the basis for the psychological pattern we have discovered. When Hitler was born, Angela was six, just able to help care for the baby and thus to draw upon herself a part of his affection. However, we know that every male's infantile incestuous desires are directed first and foremost toward the mother and that this "love" reaches its climax in the so-called Oedipal crisis, at roughly five years of age. It is worth noting that when Hitler was five, a brother was born (who died at six). A rival for his mother's love appeared in the form of this new brother, Edmund. It seems probable that the main care of the older boy was at this period shifted upon Angela, then aged eleven. What is more likely than that the displacement from mother to daughter—from mother to sister, that is—took place here for the first time? That the little boy Adolf, disappointed and slighted (as every child would feel in this situation), temporarily transferred at least part of his adoration from his mother to his sister?

The term "adoration," at any rate, is not hypothetical. That the love between Hitler's mother and her son was of uncommon intensity is an established fact. It was commented upon by all neighbors after old Hitler's death, during the years of puberty that Adolf loafed away at home, spoiled and coddled by a mother whose love he reciprocated with striking fervor. "I have never witnessed a closer attachment. Some insist that this love verged on the pathological," remarked Dr. Eduard Bloch (*Collier's*, March 1941), the Hitlers' family physician. In fact, the doctor's description conveys an atmosphere of almost physical intimacy between mother and son, and this must have added considerable weight to both his revived incestuous Oedipal strivings and their concomitant guilt feelings. After four years of this "life with mother," Klara Hitler died of cancer of the breast. Seen in this context, does it not assume particular significance that Adolf signed over his share of his father's estate to his sister as soon as he learned of the fatal nature of his mother's disease?

To put it more precisely: there is good reason to assume that not only did Adolf Hitler's Oedipus complex remain unresolved in childhood, not only was it revived in puberty (as is normal), but that, above all, his attendant guilt feelings at this time were tremendously reinforced by three factors: his father's sudden death at a moment when the son was openly at loggerheads with him, the ensuing years of living with and sponging on his mother, and, finally, her painful illness and slow death.

The last event, particularly, must have constituted a very deep trauma for the devoted son. Still under the impact of the shock, he went back to Vienna to be exposed to a veritable barrage of blows: utter loneliness, abject poverty, and, above all, failure in the entrance tests at the Academy—the final shattering of his dream of becoming an artist. It is said that the director of the Academy suggested architecture as better suited to Hitler's abilities. But the candidate Adolf Hitler had "deliberately" flunked high school, and the School of Architecture was inaccessible without a high school diploma. Briefly, he should at this point have realized that in his attempt to defeat his father he had thoroughly defeated himself.

Adolf Hitler evidently avoided ever facing this conclusion. To understand how he protected himself against so painful an insight, it is necessary, under danger of repetitiousness, to formulate still more precisely just how the events of reality were reflected—and distorted—in Hitler's unconscious until at last they probably assumed the following meaning: he had "murdered" his father, he had committed "incest" with his mother and thereby had become at least partly responsible for her death; consequently, his total failure was "punishment" for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these "crimes." His ego had remained fundamentally unequipped to deal with this conflict. Then, as at various other critical periods of his life when he presumably was threatened with some sort of "nervous" breakdown, he defended himself by a mechanism that psychoanalysis has come to term the *projection of guilt* (Anna Freud). By a kind of frantic and desperate act he threw his unconscious guilt—or, better, his self-hatred—upon the Jew.

Then it was no longer Adolf Hitler, it was the Jew who became the incestuous ("blood-poisoning") murderer. This intro-psychic trick becomes all the more plausible if one remembers that Hitler was a typical "projector" throughout his life: whatever happened to him was the fault of the "bad world," of the "other fellow," at best of "fate." (Thus in his autobiography he accounts for his final failure at school by a "severe pulmonary illness," the existence of which is at least highly questionable in view of the fact that such a reliable witness as Dr. Bloch has told the writer that he never detected even the faint traces of such an ailment. For his political defeats before 1933 Hitler blamed his opponents, for his defeat at Stalingrad his generals, and for his final defeat he returned to the absolute enemy, the Jew. True, this projection became partly deliberate, but the emphasis is on *partly*.)

And so one catches a first glimpse of the role of the "black-haired Jew boy," though none as yet of his identity. In seeking the latter, we are bound to ask ourselves two questions at this point: Why was the Jew chosen as the screen for this projection? And how does the concept of "blood-poisoning" fit into the scheme? The answers to both appear inextricably intertwined and may sound tentative. Yet, viewing the problem in its entirety, it is hard to account differently for the evidence.

Doubtless, various factors were influential in determining the choice of the Jew as the scapegoat; among them, the fact that the Vienna of Hitler's time was a hothouse of anti-Semitism must have been of major importance. Everything, however, seems to become secondary to the crucial significance of Hitler's first close personal contact with a Jew—the family physician, Dr. Eduard Bloch.

Once more it will be necessary to sift reality from its reflection in Hitler's unconscious in order to estimate the doctor's role in the Fuehrer's life. All evidence points to the persistence in Hitler's conscious mind of a sincere appreciation and gratitude for the solicitous unselfishness of the man who alleviated his beloved mother's suffering to the best of his abilities, and at hardly a nominal fee. From the hand-painted postcards the youngster sent to Dr. Bloch from Vienna to the orders issued after the Anschluss with Austria to facilitate emigration for the doctor and his family, one is justified in assuming a consistently positive attitude on Hitler's part toward the one Jew he referred to as an *"Edeljude"* (the term corresponds to "White Jew"). To show that Hitler's unconscious must in this instance have taken an exactly opposite stand, one must go further in reconstructing his early childhood.

It is an undeniable fact that children know everything that adults would prefer them not to know. There is no reason to doubt that the little boy Adolf knew about the blood relationship between his parents. It is probable that the talk he heard about the episcopal dispensation earmarked "incest" as something highly improper, particularly in a predominantly Catholic country like Austria. He may have also heard remarks about the "danger" of marriages between near relatives: three of his mother's five children had died! In conjunction with the notion of sexual intercourse as a brutal attack by the father, which is inherent in almost every little boy's Oedipal fantasies, the incest motif was bound to assume for Adolf Hitler a meaning very much akin to that of "blood poisoning."

Nor is this mere conjectural reconstruction. The Fuehrer himself has revealed that, as a little boy, he did conceive of sexual intercourse as a "brutal attack." In what is clearly an autobiographical fantasy he describes (*Mein Kampf*, Chapter II) the evils of poverty, which force "a little boy" to grow up in all-too-crowded quarters, and he continues: "But when the parents fight almost daily, their brutality leaves nothing to the imagination . . . especially when the mutual differences express themselves in the form of brutal attacks on the part of the father toward the mother, or assaults due to drunkenness. The poor little boy, at the age of six, senses things which would make even a grown-up person shudder. . . ." Can there be any serious doubt that this shudder is identical with the one that used to "run down" Hitler's spine whenever he "studied" relations between Jews and Gentiles in Vienna?

From what is known of the living conditions of the Hitler family, it is plausible that this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a genuine memory of the so-called *primal scene*—the child's witnessing of the parents' sexual intercourse. What it reveals beyond question is Hitler's unresolved Oedipal hatred of his father; what can be surmised without effort is the fear of both the physical and "physiological" dangers of "incest."

Now, at the time of the pubertal resurgence of his Oedipal strivings, the original target of Hitler's hatred, his father, was dead. But another man had actually become an integral member of the Hitler household, and several factors facilitated a very thorough transference of the paternal image to the Jewish doctor.

By its very nature, every patient-doctor relation contains elements of a child-father relation. In the present case, this may have been supported by a vague resemblance of type between the two men. Primarily, however, the doctor's professional actions must, by virtue of their intrinsic symbolism, have led to what amounted almost to a confusion of the images of father and doctor: the operation on Klara Hitler's breast may have been conducive to an identification with the physical "brutal assault," while the daily morphine injections administered to relieve suffering may have served to crystallize the physiological dangers of "incest" around the concept of "blood poisoning."

Thus, what had taken place in Hitler's mind was actually a splitting of the doctor's personality: Hitler's conscious venerated all the "good" attributes of the *doctor*; his unconscious abhorred all the evil ones of the *Jew*. The dichotomy is less startling than would seem at first sight. In fact, it is no more than an exact but oversimplified (and the unconscious tends to just such oversimplifications) reflection of Hitler's ambivalent feeling toward his father.

It should by no means be assumed that there had not been essential positive elements in the relation between father and son. In fact, the latter's very emigration to Vienna to seek his fortune was clearly an act of identification with his father, who had done the same thing at the same age—and had succeeded. More precisely, going to Vienna meant identification with that part of his father's personality that Hitler approved of and admired. Before he left, he signed his share of his inheritance over to his sister, who stood for his (dying) mother—an act of atonement, it seems, or a frantic effort to bribe fate at the last moment, to annul, as it were, his guilt of "parricide" and "incest."

The young Hitler's failure in Vienna then became for his conscience—or super-ego—a cruel punishment for having also emulated that part of his father's personality which he not only rejected more or less consciously, but with which, unconsciously, he was most strictly forbidden to identify himself. This apparently insoluble and obviously unbearable conflict was solved by projection: that part of himself, actually, that he was no longer able to live with, Hitler projected upon—or, better, transformed into—the "black-haired Jew boy." In this intra-psychic process, the doctor's role had been that of a catalyst, as it were: Hitler's contact with him had served to channelize the split, and the general anti-Semitic atmosphere of Vienna supplied the indispensable rationalizations for the choice of the Jew as target.

It can be surmised that this mechanism of projection worked with particular effectiveness in Hitler's case. Apparently, he succeeded so thoroughly in separating himself from his *alter ego,* so complete was its ejection in the guise of the "black-haired Jew boy," that he was free to take up "life with mother" again by having her substitute, his sister Angela, live with him and keep house for him; and beyond that, he was actually enabled to engage in sexual relations with his sister's substitute—her daughter Geli. The "incest" he so feared and abhorred no longer referred to his own actions, but became definitely and exclusively identical with sexual relations between Gentiles and Jews.

Thus it might be said that the result of all this psychological detective work has been not so much to discover the real "self" behind the mysterious "black-haired Jew boy" as to establish a strange—though, in this domain, frequent—identity of villain and victim.

However, I wish to stress that what has been presented here does not entail any generalizations about the nature of anti-Semitism as such. All that can be pointed to here is its origin and mechanism as it operated in one man's unconscious. This study is no more than a "case history" of a single anti-Semitic individual, and of course does not explain the devastating consequences of his particular anti-Semitism in Germany. The only connection I am bold enough to assert is that six million Jews were tortured and killed in the endeavor *set in motion* by the need to exterminate an incestuous, black-haired little monster that lived inside Adolf Hitler himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS FROM READERS

The Judaism of the Remnant

To the Editor of Commentary:

Dr. Gringauz's "Jewish Destiny as the DP's See It" [December] is to me one of the standout articles in Commentary's distinguished career. It may well become an intellectual landmark in the Jewish history of our time. For in it he has synthesized the *Weltanschauung* emerging from the Jewish catastrophe which will color and shape the outlook of world Jewry probably for generations to come.

Out of my experience of working and fighting at Dr. Gringauz's side in a common cause, I want also to recall an incident by way of footnote to your capsule-biography of him. There was a trial of nineteen of our Landsberg boys arrested on the charge of participation in disorders directed against the Germans. Dr. Grinzauz was the chief defense attorney before a high military court. Ranging far beyond the narrow questions of law, in his closing argument he developed from the recent histories of the boys the whole moral claim of Jewry before the bar of Western civilization and justice. To the Americans who heard him in that German courtroom, the sociological brilliance and moral eloquence of his plea were reminiscent of our two great "people's attorneys"—Louis Brandeis and Clarence Darrow.

Dr. Gringauz was the finest cultural talent we had in the Sherit Hapleita. It is to be hoped that American Jewry also will recognize and utilize the extraordinary gifts he now brings to us.

In introducing him, as it has other little-known voices, Commentary has again underscored its role as open platform for young, new, and important cultural energies.

Leo Srole

New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

I state with pleasure that I have read very few articles in my life giving such a deep and true analysis as Samuel Gringauz's "Jewish Destiny as the DP's See It." The question remains, however, whether the DP will only symbolize the bridge between the fragments of the Jewish people or will also try in a practical way to raise these fragments to the mission of our time.

Anyhow, my cordial congratulations to Dr. Gringauz. I am sure his article will pave the way among the intellectual elements of his new environment.

J. Schwarzbart

World Jewish Congress
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . It is so difficult in our days to say a new word, to describe a new situation. Dr. Gringauz has done it. His conception of the Scherit Hapleita is very original. He has looked deeply into the problem. Nobody before him had so worked out the peculiarity and originality of the people in the camps. . . .

Jacob Pat

Jewish Labor Committee
New York City

British Labor and Zionism

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his article in the December Commentary, Mr. Kimche ascribes the transformation of the Labor party attitude on Palestine to a series of political misunderstandings and to the change in outlook after Labor became the government. In elaborating these reasons, the author gives many "inside" details, which are indeed of value in filling out a complete picture, but he leaves unanswered certain basic questions which form the background to the situation.

Whatever may be the guilt of Zionist groups in playing down the Arab factor in their propaganda, it seems too far a stretch of the imagination to view the Labor leaders as victims of Zionist deception, what with the wealth of printed-material which has been available in the English language on all aspects of the Palestine question and from many different points of view. Even if it is granted that the Zionists had presented misleading information to the Labor party, Mr. Kimche doesn't tell us what are the factors which made for the cabinet's acceptance of the detailed briefs and arguments from the various government offices, which offices are known to abound in civil servants not friendly to the socialist policies of the new government. Why did those socialist leaders lend an ear to arguments which revolved about "the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maintenance of Britain's position" in the Middle East? What were the reasons for the government's earlier and more recent decisions about Palestine, and what has been their effect on the British position in the Eastern Mediterranean?

Mr. Kimche also mentions the competition between Britain and Russia, but he doesn't explain the nature of the conflict between these two powers and the role of the United States in the matter. Such discussions appear to go far afield from the original theme, but it is otherwise impossible to account for the paradoxical policies of the socialist government in England. Such factors as Bevin's remembrance of Jewish Communists are not sufficient explanation for the socialist cabinet's support of the reactionary Arab League. We must rather search for reasons in such factors as England's economic crisis; her reliance on American assistance; America's reluctance to play an anti-Zionist role, and her use of England, ally in all other strategic matters, to present the pro-Arab case for the Western bloc; and the reluctance of the Arab rulers to trust the propaganda of the Soviet Union in support of Arab nationalism. An investigation of these factors would better reveal the background of the enigma against which the personal factors and misunderstandings discussed by Mr. Kimche come into play.

PHILIP FLEISHMAN

Bronx, New York

Social Discrimination

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Carey McWilliams' article in your November issue, "Does Social Discrimination Really Matter?" is a fundamental analysis of a primary nature.

I am reminded of the public opinion studies which indicate high ratios of prejudice in upper income brackets. At the same time Mr. Roper's most recent poll indicates widespread prejudice in rural areas. Both revelations must enter into the planning of a realistic human relations program.

For the rural and village regions we must work in the realm of stereotypes and cultural climate without the association of people across cultural lines, something often overlooked by contemporary sociologists who concentrate on cities.

But for the point made by Mr. McWilliams, the realistic approach is that of securing active leadership of the so-called conservatives, a condition usually not attained by the liberals and their groups. If a dent is to be made in the circles of social discrimination, the major influence must be exerted by business, political, and social leaders who can be won by the proper approach based on ideals and self-interest.

I hope the intergroup agencies will recognize this fact and act upon it.

WILLARD JOHNSON
National Program Director
National Conference of Christians and Jews
New York City

Jewish Music

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Dr. Kurt List's article, "The Renaissance of Jewish Music," in the December COMMENTARY with great interest. Although one might dispute his opinion that our models for new music should be the composers Schoenberg and Mahler, there is validity in his suggestions that there are three choices open for us: to adhere to the pure traditional chant, to create a new style reminiscent of the modal quality of traditional music, or to write fresh, new music in contemporary style without reference to the traditional sources. . . .

However, I was quite surprised that nowhere in his article does Dr. List give credit to the intensive and devoted activities of the National Jewish Music Council sponsored by the National Jewish Welfare Board as one of the most significant stimuli for that renaissance which is going on in Jewish music in this country. We should therefore like to call your attention to the fact that for the past three and a half years, due in great part to our many-faceted program, hundreds of Jewish communities, over fifty national Jewish organizations, Jewish centers, synagogues, Jewish schools, and other Jewish institutions, as well as the major orchestras, major and local broadcast stations, and prominent artists have engaged in performing Jewish music, during the annual Jewish Music Festival and other times during the year. The demand for our materials, which include bibliographies of available materials, suggestions for programs, and *Jewish Music Notes*, is so great, that it is clearly evident that the National Jewish Music Council is satisfying a most urgent need. We know of no other organized and coordinated effort anywhere in the world which has as we do the objective of advancing Jewish music. . . .

ETHEL C. COHEN
Chairman
National Jewish Music Council
New York City

Correction by Mr. Roper

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In my article on "Public Opinion Polling. Science or Business?" in the November COM-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MENTARY I indicated that there was a solid front of the business men at the Second International Public Opinion Research Conference at Williamstown. A cordial letter from Mr. Elmo Roper, director of the well-known *Fortune* poll, indicates that he was not present at the meeting at which the other business leaders expressed their antipathy toward a standards committee for the new organization. He said that if he had been present at the meeting he would have come out solidly in favor of such a standards committee to raise the level of procedure in public opinion research. Mr. Roper also wished to disassociate himself from the campaign against Mr. Radvanyi. I believe that Mr. Roper's denial that he was participating in a solid front of business men vs. statisticians is very important. I should add that the standards of research used by Mr. Roper in commercial work are high for the field. I apologize to Mr. Roper and I am glad to bring this new information to the readers of COMMENTARY.

ARNOLD ROSE

Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri

The Critic's Task

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Raymond Rosenthal handled the review of John Horne Burns' novel, *The Gallery*, in the December COMMENTARY, on the plane of ideas alone. . . . I felt and enjoyed the review's keen seriousness, the taut displacement of the author's ideas for those of the critic. But Mr. Rosenthal hurled intangibles like so much invective, and did not for one moment let the author display his gait nor his tale. Any review should at least tell you what the author tried to say. . . . If the characters in the book had no relation to the realities of our day, it was Mr. Rosenthal's job to show why he thought so. Mr. Rosenthal is a writer of considerable talent, but even a champion is disqualified when he wins a race by knocking down all the hurdles on the course.

ALLEN ERICSON

Poughkeepsie, New York

Moshe Leib Halpern

Three subscribers have called our attention to certain errors in the biographical note published with Moshe Leib Halpern's poem, "Harshber the Coal Heaver," in the November COMMENTARY. Nineteen forty-seven was the fifteenth anniversary of the poet's death, not the fiftieth, as the note stated; the correct spelling of his name is "Halpern," not "Halperin."—ED.

On "Commentary"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I regard Lewis Corey's article in the August COMMENTARY as an excellent statement of the major issues of liberalism. And may I at the same time congratulate you on the continuously high standard that makes your periodical preeminent among journals of its kind?

R. M. MACIVER

Columbia University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . You have one of the best intellectual journals I have seen in a long time. . . .

HAROLD TAYLOR
President

Sarah Lawrence College
Bronxville, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I can truthfully say that I look forward eagerly to the arrivals of your publication, for I have yet to find an issue in which there were not several articles and reports of lasting interest that by their broad and thorough analysis of some phase of Jewish life made one feel more attuned with the pulse of Jewish events.

As a leader in Cuban Jewry, I have found COMMENTARY particularly valuable in spreading the true picture on Jewish problems amongst my Christian friends, as well as giving a greater insight on the background of developments to those Jewish groups who lack good sources of information on fast-moving events.

I had several of your articles translated into Spanish and published in the Cuban press, particularly those dealing with the Palestine situation. It is completely heartfelt when I say that COMMENTARY is a publication that most creditably reflects the finest values of American Jewry. It is the type of publication one proudly passes on to Christian friends, knowing that its high editorial standards, completeness, and fair treatment of all issues build good-will, respect, and sympathetic understanding.

You deserve the warmest congratulations!

ADOLPH H. KATES
President, B'nai B'rith
Maimonides Lodge

Havana, Cuba

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Modern Man as Jew

THE VICTIM. By SAUL BELLOW. New York, Vanguard, 1947. 294 pp. $2.75.

Reviewed by MARTIN GREENBERG

IN MOST American fiction concerned with Jews in more than an incidental way, Jewishness has been looked on as constituting a kind of world, and Jews as people who inhabit this world. This Jewish world had a distinct and recognizable geographical location—the East Side, the Bronx, Williamsburg, Coney Island, to name a few of the places—and spoke a distinct and recognizable idiom. Like Yiddish literature, it was a literature of idiom, and no small part of the achievement of such writers as Daniel Fuchs and Clifford Odets was their ability to re-create this Jewish world, to render its idiom. Compared to Kasrilevke, this world was not a very stable one, its Jewish quality not very pure; but stable or unstable, pure or impure, to be a Jew meant to inhabit it. Even in Delmore Schwartz's obsessive stories of childhood, where the Jewish quality has lost almost all its graces, being generalized into the gray horror of petty-bourgeois existence, and the Jewish idiom has lost all its vigor, lingering on as a faint, dispirited echo, Jewishness is seen as the constituent element of, if not a world, at least a milieu, a family.

This type of literature was written by Jews. Where Jews have been portrayed outside a Jewish world—here we have to reckon with Jewish and Gentile writers both—they have been viewed either as detached fragments of such a world; or as human beings who happen to be Jewish—that is, their Jewishness in some sense or another has been dissociated from their human essence and relegated to a secondary place (however important the secondary place is conceded to be); or they have been reduced to represent some single thing or principle, good or bad. Saul Bellow's *The Victim* is, as far as I know, the first attempt in American literature to consider Jewishness not in its singularity, not as constitutive of a special world of experience, but as a quality that informs all of modern life, as the quality of modernity itself.

EVERYTHING that stamps Asa Leventhal, the hero of this novel, as a Jew, stamps him at the same time as a representative *homo urbis*. Take his speech, for example. Though there is little or nothing in it that is specifically Jewish, it has an indefinable Jewish quality. Though this is a Jew talking, we know at the same time that it is the general accent of the metropolis which we hear, the harsh, fragmentary, exhausted language of the street, department store, subway, and apartment house. ("'Wait a minute, what's your idea of who runs things?' said Leventhal.")

But Leventhal is most a Jew, and most a man of the modern city, in the guilt and loneliness of his sense of having presumed on the world, of having "got away with it," as he expresses it.

His relative good fortune as an editor of a New York trade magazine he enjoys uneasily, as somehow not his due. It is an act of presumption on his part, an "infringement," narrowly to have escaped the ranks of "the lost, the outcast, the overcome, the effaced, the ruined" and to have established himself in the world. He possesses nothing with perfect certainty: neither his wife, who once loved another man; nor his brother, married to an Italian woman and now a workingman wearing the kind of clothes his father used to sell in his store; nor his job.

His feeling of having trespassed, of presuming, of not belonging, of not possessing, is plainly Jewish, of course—it is the psychology of the modern *galut*. But it is plainly something else too. It is an essential part of the sense of the city that is captured so well in this novel, it is the malaise of the megalopolis, it is the discomfiture and dispossession of everything human in face of the colossal indifference of modern metropolises. Not only the Jews are in *galut*.

Allbee, the decayed anti-Semite who suddenly emerges out of the feverish heat of a New

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

York summer to challenge Leventhal, as if conjured up out of his own guilty feelings, though real enough, is also Leventhal's *alter ego*. He charges Leventhal explicitly with what Leventhal has already charged himself with obscurely: that Leventhal is indeed guilty—of Allbee's ruin, by having usurped a place in the world which a superior right would assign to Allbee; that their positions are inverted—the one belongs where the other is. Leventhal, self-convicted, his habitual anxious impassivity pierced, is unable properly to defend himself. Allbee gradually violates—and so attempts to dispossess Leventhal of—the most intimate center of his personal security: first his apartment, which Allbee moves into and makes foul; next his wife's love letters; then, when Allbee brings in a woman from the street, his bed; finally Allbee turns on the gas and by his own attempted suicide attempts to deprive Leventhal even of his life.

The anti-Semite is both a materialization of the real threats that surround Leventhal, and a negative, extreme inversion of himself. The relationship of both to each other has a kind of lopsided symmetry and ingenious duality. If Allbee is a paranoiac, Leventhal is at least an extremely suspicious person; if Allbee, because he knows Leventhal is a Jew, presumes to know him absolutely, in a way that only God can know a person, Leventhal at least presumes to explain Allbee by his being a drunkard; if Allbee, though claiming to be Leventhal's victim, really victimizes Leventhal, Leventhal is at least in some degree responsible for Allbee's having lost his job. Insofar as Allbee is Leventhal's negative self, Leventhal is his own victim; insofar as Allbee exists independently, Leventhal is the victim of another.

Threatened from within and from without—what is this if not the Jewish situation? if not the general situation?

If Leventhal were not a Jew, were neutral, *The Victim* would be simply one of many bleak accounts of a modern life in the thin manner of American naturalism. The fact that he is a Jew gives the story its radical depth. What would otherwise tend to be a sociological description of one man's *lot*, now acquires a certain metaphysical quality, a quality of *fate*. For a Jew is inescapably and utterly committed to the present; there is no retreat, retreat would only lead him to the ghetto (as Leventhal realizes, when he rejects his father's proud ghetto disdain of everything except the *groschen* of the world).

One of the reasons why Jews have figured so prominently as characters in modern literature is just this, their radical involvement in the modern world. This involvement has been seen invidiously by reactionary critics of modern society, for whom the omnipresent Jew is only the sign and symbol of the falling-off of contemporary life from some more splendid earlier state. But it has also been viewed under another aspect, as *the* human situation, as modern fate (*Ulysses*, for example).

The Victim, then, is concerned with one of the great themes of European literature. Knowing this, one feels the disparity between the largeness of its theme and the modest, narrow, bare, abrupt American genre of writing in which it is realized. But this is perhaps unfair to the author. He is not after all seeking to emulate European examples; he is writing an American novel, and the American accent is inevitably a modest one.

A Heroic Drama

Jacob's Dream. By Richard Beer-Hofmann. Translated by Ida Bension Wynn. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947. 188 pp. $2.50.

Reviewed by Stephen Spender

Recent years have seen a revival of interest in the poetic drama. Although it cannot be said that the poetic form has achieved significant victories in the theater, it may be claimed that the modern poet can only express certain ideas in dramatic form and that some of the most important poetry written in this century has, in fact, been dramatic. That important poems should be written which depend for their realization on a theater which cannot interpret them adequately, is an unsatisfactory situation. Nevertheless this should not lead us to ignore the fact that some of the most effective poetic statements of our time have been made in the poetic plays of Claudel, *The Dynasts* of Thomas Hardy, *Murder in the Cathedral* of T. S. Eliot, *Der Turm* of Hofmannsthal, and in *Jacob's Dream* of Beer-Hofmann.

It is significant also that four plays by poets expressing ideas so different as Hardy in *The Dynasts*, Claudel in *L'Annonce Faite à Marie*,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral,* and Beer-Hofmann in *Jacob's Dream,* should yet have most important characteristics in common. All these plays are concerned with man in relation to the historic human destiny within the universe, and all emphasize the inevitability of suffering of the most extreme kind if redemption is to be possible. They are all, in their different ways, religious statements, and they are "tragic statements" rather than tragedies because they emphasize tragedy as the human condition, beside which the actual conflicts which result in suffering have only secondary importance.

The Jewish attitude to experience (that of a very old race), as expressed by Beer-Hofmann, has more in common with Hardy's fatalism than with the Christian mysticism of Claudel or Eliot. To both Hardy and Beer-Hofmann, there is a sense of the guilt of the creative forces of the universe towards man as well as of man towards God and his fellowman. In Hardy, man is the victim of forces predominantly malicious, projections of his own spirit which, weighing the scale of human destiny towards the sinister and evil, form a kind of democracy of the whole human spiritual life in which the bad forces are almost certain always to form a parliamentary majority. In Beer-Hofmann men are victims of their own personalities and God has guilt in having created men as they are—a point of view very similar to Hardy's.

These four plays must be described as "successful" quite apart from any success they might have on the stage, because it is impossible to imagine the human drama, invented on so large a scale, being created in any other form for our time than in a dramatic and poetic one. Only poetry—or a prose which borrows imagistic effects from poetry—can concentrate into a small space of action such widely diffused material drawn from the history of races and the distances between heaven and earth.

I HAVE never seen *Jacob's Dream* performed (indeed I have only read it recently). Apparently it attracted large audiences in Berlin and Vienna before the time of Hitler. I can imagine people being deeply moved by it, as by an impressive religious ceremony, but it is not, by ordinary standards, good theater. The action, indeed, does not so much develop, as unfold and open into a vision that entirely dwarfs what would seem to be its natural center—the rivalry between Jacob and his brother Edom. The first act is concerned with Jacob receiving from Isaac on his deathbed the blessing that should be bestowed upon his brother Edom. This act is the tragedy of Rachel, torn between Edom's wrath, succeeded by the translucent wave of Jacob's vision. Rachel is submerged by the new emotion of the second act between her love for her two sons, seeking to appease Edom by offering him the whole inheritance of Isaac if he will renounce vengeance on Jacob for having stolen the blessing. The next act is the story of Jacob turning Edom from his wrath by gentleness, and the last act shows us Jacob alone with the angels.

This scenario has little unity of action. It is like a succession of three waves: the wave of Rachel's passion succeeded by the wave of the two brothers, and Edom is submerged by Jacob's vision. There is no real conflict between the characters: or, rather, the conflict is with a protagonist who does not appear—God.

At the same time, poetically, a wonderful unity of growth is achieved: of passion leading to reconciliation and reconciliation to supreme vision.

THERE is a beauty of invention in, for example, the conversation between the spring which flows at Jacob's feet and the stone pillow supporting his head, which recalls the spiritual fantasy of Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound* and perhaps also certain passages in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake.* Even in translation (and Ida Bension Wynn's translation is a model of its kind) the language rises easily to the heights demanded of it when the angels appear. And perhaps the strength of the play does not lie so much in the language itself as in the remarkable conviction of the dignity and nobility of life which enables Beer-Hofmann to inhabit a world where the Old Testament with its patriarchs and its angels is as real as the landscape of the Promised Land. The dramatic action which creates for us the distress of Rachel, the wrath of Edom, the reconciliation of the brothers, and the vision of Jacob has a sculptural quality resembling a procession of figures belonging to a nobler age portrayed on a marble frieze.

No poem could be more profoundly encouraging and heroic than this play which reminds us inescapably of the grandeur of man's tasks in life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Polish Tragedy

BETWEEN FEAR AND HOPE. By S. L. SHNEIDERMAN. New York, Arco, 1947. 316 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by HAL LEHRMAN

MR. SHNEIDERMAN should have limited his book to the Jewish agony in Poland, past and present. Any reporter, even one whose style is meager and dull, can draw emotion from this terrible theme. But the correspondent of the *Morning Journal* goes on from denouncing the Polish crime against the Jews to blinking away the Communist crime against the Poles. He doesn't even say "It serves them right"—an understandable position, though not very adult. He simply finds nothing but occasions for democratic rapture in the works of the current Warsaw regime. The "fear" in his title refers to the pogromist aptitudes of the Polish masses; the "hope" derives solely from the benign influences of that Moscow-inspired trinity, Bierut, Gomulka, and Berman.

The bulk of the book deals with the continuing Gehenna for the Jews in Poland. Treatment of the subject is routine, but the epic quality of essential facts must give any account of them a breath of tragic greatness. In prewar Warsaw, Mr. Shneiderman recalls, even "Jewish vendors of bagels used to be chased all day long by the police." His eyes are dry over the disappearance of the old regime, an attitude which this reviewer and all students of Poland's modern history must share. For centuries the upper classes cried aloud for freedom, and when they won it they defined it as the right "to persecute minorities and opposition parties, to organize pogroms, and to fire on striking workers."

But Poland's counts and colonels were no match for the Nazis in devising virile solutions for the Jewish problem. The Shneiderman recital of the Warsaw Ghetto's destruction falls short of the promise on the jacket: "the whole story of the incredible bravery of its heroes." More of the inner story, in less space, is told in a recent COMMENTARY article by one of those who fought and escaped. Rummaging through the ruins, however, Mr. Shneiderman excavates a multitude of the relics of horror.

"IN OUR ears a monstrous stillness sounded," he writes of his tour of the rubble heaps. "Here no living creature could thrive—here Nazism had won a complete victory." On some streets only a section of wall still stands; on others, even the streets have vanished. "Only the sky has remained unchanged." There are tortured fragments from documents of the holocaust: "No use looking for the child's body. Everything was burned. . . . " "Our only fortune, a bit of cyanide, has evaporated. . . . " The name "Esther" scratched in Greek capitals on a prison wall. A few wrecked freight trains near the Umschlagplatz [Redistribution Center], where Jews of all nations were herded for the crematories. SS General Stroop wrote in his daily reports on Operation Ghetto, which he bound in a splendid leather cover and sent as a gift to Hitler: "Resistance of the Jews and bandits could be broken only by the most ruthless use of all our forces and our energy, night and day. . . . I therefore decided to destroy the entire Jewish quarter, by setting every house on fire."

Eight months later, workers in the debris found a 15-year-old girl, the last survivor. Wounded in the leg by a bomb fragment, she had kept alive underground by mixing well water with two bags of flour in her bunker. The experimenting Nazi doctors declared her an "extraordinary case." They gave her special soups, tonic injections, frequent medical checkups, and a pair of canvas shoes with wooden soles, of which she was very proud. Gradually "her face regained a human appearance." One day, a cell-mate wrote, "we saw Helenka being escorted through the low iron gate. . . . Two hours later, Helenka's shoes were returned to the prison store. . . . "

WHERE were the Poles during all this? With rare exceptions, they were enjoying the show. Peddlers and carnivals thrived just outside the Ghetto walls, among the crowds gathered to watch "Jewish chops being broiled" inside. "Explosions shook the buildings, the streets," an eye-witness reported, "but not the hearts of the people." The Gentile poet Adam Polewka knew "there were many decent and noble Poles who risked their lives to save Jews," but he had to confess in sorrow that most of his countrymen were lethargic and some were sheerly delighted over the massacres. "The Germans will throw stones on Hitler's grave," Poles complacently promised one another during the Nazi period, "but [we] will throw flowers on it, because Hitler . . . has liberated us from the Jews."

Not entirely "liberated," it became obvious

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when Jewish survivors began returning from cellars, death-camps, and the Soviet Union. These ghosts wanted their homes back, their shops, their right to live again. Apart from the "recovered" ex-German territories, where Jewish colonists could settle with some toleration, life was as impossible as ever. Since Poland had produced no quisling, and intolerance had not collaborated with the Nazis, anti-Semitism emerged from the war unstained—and was still considered patriotic. "Kill the Jews and save Poland!" a poster screamed at Mr. Shneiderman in 1946 from the walls of Lodz. The ancient synagogue at Kazimierz was literally torn to pieces by the local population months *after* the German departure, when the first Jews returned. The townspeople "divided among themselves the stained glass windows, the benches, the tables, even the parchment of the holy scrolls." There was the crowning abomination at Kielce, with its chain reaction of pogroms in other districts.

MR. SHNEIDERMAN had unusual opportunities at Kielce. He arrived there only a day after the killings. He talked to soldiers, pogromists, and Jewish survivors. He attended the funeral of forty-two victims. He sat through the trial of twelve assassins. Yet he is able to assert—blandly, without proof, as if it were an axiom—that the outrage was the work of the "underground." This "underground," being anti-government, is rightist and reactionary, naturally. In passing judgment he even neglects his own evidence. His account of the trial, for instance, notes that among the *defendants* were the chiefs of the district security police and of the regional and local militia—all appointees of the Soviet-sponsored regime. He declares his "astonishment" over this, but nothing more.

Mr. Shneiderman's unstated but clear purpose throughout is to prove that Poland is a case of black and white, with purity residing entirely in the camp of the regime. His efforts to make his point are repeatedly hampered by his own testimony. Nowhere does he concede the smallest possibility that the government might also be a shade anti-Semitic, indifferent, or even provocative. Yet he admits that news of the Kielce pogromists' execution was officially suppressed (for fear of antagonizing voters); that the Communists recruited ex-fascists into their police, which he blames on oversight (an oversight that repeated itself in every satellite state of Russia's Europe); that the Polish regime failed to make anti-Semitism a crime; that Jewish traders are afraid to function even in Warsaw, seat of Communist authority; that Jewish claims for property restitution have largely gone unanswered (a practise which this reviewer has encountered everywhere else East of Stettin-Trieste); and that in the rare cases in which such claims are honored, anti-Semites can bulldoze Jewish proprietors with impunity and even drive them forth again.

In Cracow, Mr. Shneiderman found some dozen young Jews squatting in the wreckage of a synagogue and waiting to emigrate. "The security authorities assigned them a few old rifles, to be used if the synagogue were attacked," he tells us—but fails to understand the meaning of what he tells us. He takes most of his twenty chapters to demonstrate that the position of Jewry in the new Poland is without hope and defenseless. Yet he can still quote with approval the slogans of Jewish Communists to the effect that the Jews should stay on and "fight fascism."

Mr. Shneiderman has an odd double standard for the Poles. When he talks, with justified bitterness, about treatment of the Jews, he makes all Poles out to be scoundrels. But when he talks about the wonderful government, all Poles somehow become enthusiastic comrades and noble fellows—except the opposition, of course. Of the newly-exiled Mikolajczyk, he says sneeringly that the Peasant leader seemed to be more eager to tell him about the excesses of the Communist police than about agrarian problems—a preoccupation which anyone who has ever observed the refinements of Communist police in action can understand. Mr. Shneiderman also chides Mikolajczyk for looking westward (as if Bierut did not occasionally glance in the direction of Moscow). The author scrupulously avoids nasty topics like phony elections, terrorism, and corruption. He uses the word "democracy" abundantly, in the orthodox *Pravda* sense. No hint here that Poland's real government is a secret inner council headed by a Soviet general. Everything the Polish democracy does is just right: especially reconstruction, which is performing miracles. "Poland is starved for tools of all kinds," Mr. Shneiderman grieves—but he finds it reasonable for Polish Communists to tie their country's economy up with the economy of the USSR, the last place in the world from which Poland can expect adequate tools of any kind. As for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Russia herself, he is so eager to justify Soviet seizure of eastern Poland that he gets himself into a sweat denouncing Casimir the Great for sending Polish cavalry into Lvov back in the 14th century. And he ends with a passionate defense of Poland's expanded western frontier that should bring the ache of gratitude to the hottest chauvinist's throat.

In short: on the plight of Poland's Jews, Mr. Shneiderman enlightens the reader but remains himself confused; on the plight of Poland, he is irrelevant, immaterial, and incompetent.

Folklore of Yemen

FROM THE LAND OF SHEBA: TALES OF THE JEWS OF YEMEN. Collected and edited by S. D. GOITEIN. New York, Schocken Books, 1947 (Schocken Library No. 3). 122 pp. $1.50.

Reviewed by G. LEVI DELLA VIDA

THE Jewish community in Yemen, so we are told, is the oldest in existence. This may or may not be true, since we are fully in the dark about its origin, and the scattered records of its history before the late Middle Ages which we possess are tainted with legend. The Fallasha community in Ethiopia seems to be still older. However, the latter, due to its isolation from the rest of the Diaspora and the interference of a heterogeneous surrounding, has forgotten or altered most of its religious tradition and failed to keep up with the further development of Jewish thought and manners. The Yemenite Jews, on the contrary, partook of all the great spiritual movements in Judaism at least until the 16th century, when they too were cut off from any substantial intercourse with the civilized world. Isolation, therefore, is four centuries old, a time span quite sufficient to confer a definite tinge of archaism upon the Yemenite Jews, the more so because the oppression of the Turkish Governors and the Zaidi Imams (matched only by the oppression of the Moroccan Jews by their Moslem masters previous to the French protectorate) compelled them to cling faithfully to their manners and customs.

THE tales, legends, and stories here collected and edited by the distinguished professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, S. D. Goitein, present a cross-section of the past and present of the Yemenite Jews. These Jews appear as representatives of a peculiar brand of Judaism, but also as members of a much broader community, namely of mankind at large. Such a story as the humorous adventure of Ibn Oded, the spoiled offspring of a local "boss" who finally is overcome by his less influential rival, could easily be transferred from its Yemenite environment into any other; nevertheless, the picture of family and public life, continuously tampered with by the whimsical yet ultimately mild interference of the Moslem authorities, gives it a flavor which could hardly be tasted elsewhere. Other stories, dealing with the relations of the Jews with their "protectors," the powerful chiefs of Arab tribes, while reminding us of similar situations in medieval Europe, are by no means less characteristic. The lovely fairy tale of the "Manly Maiden" is in the same line as some stories in the Arabian Nights; and the "Cracker" story repeats a widespread motif—that of the numskull who unwittingly deceives the robbers and unexpectedly becomes rich—which is to be found even in the tales of the Grimm brothers. On the other hand, standard Jewish tradition, although reshaped in a Yemenite mood, is found in the Aggadot and the stories about the Learned, among them a delightful one concerning the great Maimonides.

The reports about the past, ancient and recent, of the Yemenite Jews, their toils and sufferings, their hopes and expectations, culminating in the appearance of the false Messiah towards the end of the 19th century, are more closely connected with local history and legend. However, the two typical features of Jewish life, namely hardship and persecution stubbornly met with unshakable faith in divine assistance, and the irrepressible sense of humor which seems to be the never failing remedy for the tragedy of Judaism, are always present, with only slight differentiations.

Some of the stories from the Land of Sheba were gathered from various printed sources; many others, however, bear the label "told to the editor." This is an all too modest way to point out the deep, far-reaching, and painstaking study done by Professor Goitein, an outstanding authority in many fields of Arabic and Hebrew history and literature, of the language and lore of the Yemenite Jews. In making a part of his rich harvest available to a wide public, he deserves thankful acknowledgment from all those interested in Jewish tradition and general folklore.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who Owns the Air-Waves?

THE AMERICAN RADIO: REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. By LLEWELLYN WHITE. University of Chicago Press, 1947. 260 pp. $3.25.

Reviewed by JAMES RORTY

THIS publication of the Commission on Freedom of the Press is in many respects one of its best and will add greatly to the net impressiveness of its performance. Llewellyn White, who served as assistant director of the staff, has written a lively, forthright, and well organized analysis of the American system of broadcasting —on the whole the best that has appeared to date, even though he thinks and writes within a rather narrow and "practical" frame of reference.

Mr. White is or was a working newspaperman and a good one. Hence he exhibits the city room's traditional aversion to the advertising men; his performance is brisk, irreverent, and frequently exhilarating, like that of the night editor's dog who has been told to clean the fat cats out of the business office.

What radio's best friends don't tell it, and what Mr. White tells it at considerable length, is that the social and political snubs and rebuffs to which the industry has been increasingly subjected of late are largely caused by the peculiar fragrances emanating from a half dozen large advertising agencies. Starting in the late 20's—when this writer was still an agency copy-writer and saw them do it—these agencies took radio the way Grant took Richmond, or, if you like, the way Al Capone took Chicago. In describing how it was done, the historian of the N.W. Ayer agency writes: " . . . Until 1930, all agencies tended to look for attractive programs and then to seek advertisers who would take a fling at broadcasting. After 1930, much of the original glamor and mystery of radio had vanished, and men had to take a more realistic approach. The Ayer firm rapidly developed the view that an agency must start with the client's sales problems, determine whether radio can help, and then devise a program which will achieve specific ends in terms of sales. The complete reversal of method is significant."

As a result of this reversal the agencies were soon not only building programs and hiring talent, but also choosing the times at which their shows would be broadcast and the cities in which they would be heard. In short, the ad-men had muscled in for keeps.

In pointing out what this situation means in terms of pressures, Mr. White writes: "The merest suggestion from a courageous network executive that he might set aside a choice hour in the evening for a brave new venture in the public service could bring a reminder from half a dozen agencies of the fact that they could easily take their business next door—and his listeners with it. What would happen if the broadcasters or even the networks moved in unison is a matter for conjecture. They have never tried it."

Mr. White recommends that they try it; in fact this is his principal recommendation, and the pages in which he urges the networks to recapture control of programming and purge the ad-men from the production studios are among the most provocative in the book.

Not until the broadcasters have achieved their basic emancipation from the ad-men, thinks Mr. White, will they be in a position to adopt his other recommendations, such as to "Assume a position of vigorous editorial leadership in public affairs. . . . Reject the role of parasite feeding on the older media and set about training their own producers, directors, actors, writers, editors, commentators and entertainers. . . . Assume the responsibility for adequately treating all important controversial public issues, substituting the criterion of public need for the criterion of acceptability to sponsors, advertising men, or overly sensitive public officials."

THIS is the core of Mr. White's program, yet it is rather conspicuously absent from the heavily condensed and grayed-down recommendations of the Commission itself, by which his book is prefaced. Its most radical recommendation, and practically the only one which is more than merely hortatory, is that the broadcasters adopt the general practice of separating advertising from programs, and that if they fail to take such action voluntarily, the FCC use its licensing power to bring about this reform.

Obviously, the Commission was determined to keep its appraisal of radio within an even narrower frame of reference than does Mr. White. The present structure and control of the industry is not challenged, even to the extent that Mr. White challenges it when he urges that the broadcasters—themselves barely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

distinguishable by this jaundiced eye from admen either in professional quality or in devotion to the public interest—drive the ad-men from the temple of the air. In fact the whole analysis seems to be premised on a mere undocumented opinion, which this writer does not share, that the American system of broadcasting is the freest and best in the world and that it is merely a matter of making it freer and better. No comparison with the British, Canadian, or other systems is introduced.

Even more unfortunate is the failure of either Mr. White or the Commission to give any consideration to the broad economic and cultural matrix in which radio is set.

Seemingly they regard the American system of advertising-supported radio broadcasting not merely as an irreversible *fait accompli* but as an economic and cultural institution having a certain organic inevitability and rightness. Actually, as Mr. White himself shows, the course taken by American radio was sheer historical accident. That the people's ether would ever become a commodity to be traded in like land for the unearned increment—which is what has happened despite the provisions of existing radio law—is a consummation which twenty-five years ago was inconceivable to David Sarnoff, Herbert Hoover, and Lee De Forest. Sarnoff thought radio broadcasting might eventually acquire the quasi-public status of the library, with appropriate foundation support. Instead, business picked up radio like a foundling off the street and put her to work selling gargles and gadgets, toothpaste and stocks and bonds.

The Colonial Scene

AMERICAN OVERTURE By ABRAM VOSSEN GOODMAN. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947. 265 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by HERBERT B. EHRMANN

THIS volume is a valuable contribution toward the materials out of which the history of Jews in America will eventually be written. Like the original researches of Lee M. Friedman, Mr. Goodman's book is a collection of historical bits and incidents told interestingly and amusingly. The author, however, gives his narrative some unity by centering it around the struggle of the early Jewish settlers for full religious and civil rights on American soil.

It is most refreshing to read a treatise about discrimination against Jews that does not discuss the subject as if it were a peculiar phenomenon unrelated to the prevailing mood of the time and place. Too often the persecution of Jews is described as if it were an isolated outburst of malice in an era and area otherwise dominated by good will. Mr. Goodman's book is a wholesome reminder that, as a matter of history, the persecution of Jews has always been part of a larger cruelty and oppression.

IN *American Overture* we see this subject properly related to the aggressive bigotry of the age both in Europe and the American settlements. At that time the world was filled with vigorous persecutions of one sect by another, rendered more effective by the prevailing union of church and state. Non-conformists of all kinds were heartily hated and feared. In this atmosphere, discrimination against Jews was natural and inevitable.

Nevertheless, it is a historical fact, marked by Mr. Goodman, that in some early American settlements Jews were not oppressed to the same degree as were other sects such as the Catholics or the Quakers. The author suggests that this may have been due to the small number of Jewish settlers. However, the most liberal attitude toward Jews was shown in Georgia where their proportion was highest. Another area of relative tolerance was Puritan New England. Is there not, perhaps, a more likely explanation?

For entirely different reasons, New Testament influence was very weak in both Georgia and the land of the Puritans. The prevailing spirit in the Southern colony was irreligious, if not atheistic; the Puritans were almost exclusively devoted to the Old Testament. Now the belief that "the Jews killed Christ" stems entirely from a distortion of the crucifixion story in the New Testament. It is entirely possible, therefore, that this strange similarity of attitude in irreligious Georgia and deeply religious New England is some proof of the efficacy of the "Christ-killer" myth in creating prejudice against Jews.

NEVERTHELESS, Mr. Goodman performs a real service in calling attention to the small number of Jews among the early settlers. He estimates that there were probably no more than a thousand Jews among three million colonials, and that the famed Newport Jewish colony in its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hey-day probably totaled about one hundred and fifty souls. It is obvious that such a tiny proportion of the population, scattered as it was from New England to Georgia, could not, unless ghettoized, long maintain a distinctively *Jewish* existence either in the original settlements or in the places to which their children moved. No sound conclusion, therefore, as to the survival of Jews as such in the United States can be drawn from the fact that today we can identify very few of the descendants of these Jewish colonials. The sturdy and still flourishing Jewish communities founded by the mass immigration of the 19th century throughout the Middle West, the South, and the Far West, afford more reliable material for this sort of speculation.

Although few in number, the early Jewish settlers were not deterred in the least from waging a spirited and sustained battle for full civil and religious liberties. They went even further and demanded, as of right, the responsibilities of citizenship, including the obligation to stand guard and serve as soldiers. Like their Christian counterparts, these pioneers were not at all cowed by the experiences of persecution in Europe. They came to this country to live the lives of free men and women and they intended to carry out their purpose. Stuffy dignitaries and fanatical bigots tried in vain to stop them. In their rather successful fight for their own integrity, this handful of Jewish pioneers played an important part in creating that most vital of all American traditions, civic equality.

Books like *American Overture* also offer Jewish scholars an excellent opportunity to test some of their assumptions about Jewish life in this country. Surely, the rich experience of three centuries in a free society is worth more in forming opinions about this subject than the past in Poland, Moorish Spain, or ancient Alexandria. Let us take, for instance, the theory, currently advanced by a number of Jewish scholars, that Jews constitute and are bound together by a single secular "culture." *American Overture* would seem to indicate the contrary and suggest that Jews who come to these shores from different countries may actually have been held apart from one another because of their varying cultural backgrounds. In 1733 two shiploads of Jews arrived in Georgia, one almost wholly Ashkenazim, the other almost entirely Sephardim. Shortly thereafter a group of Lutheran refugees from Salzburg settled in the colony. The Ashkenazim and the Lutherans, despite the wide gap between Orthodox Judaism and Evangelical Christianity, found it easy to establish warm social contacts, being drawn together by a common language and memories of childhood in Germany. The social relations between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim, on the other hand, were so bad that they became a public scandal.

Is not this early Georgia experience a test-tube demonstration of what has happened a thousand times in America? Jews who come to this country from various parts of the world are at first divided by cultural differences. Then, just as the shared experience of American life tends to bring together different ancestral groups, so, within the Jewish group itself, it accomplishes a similar purpose. Once in the common current of an evolving American civilization, far from having their unity splintered by their environment, as is often stated, American Jews find a new fellowship with one another based on a sense of like spiritual values and community responsibility.

The Man of Munich

THE LIFE OF NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN. By KEITH FEILING. New York, Macmillan, 1946. 480 pp. $6.00.

Reviewed by SAMUEL J. HURWITZ

KEITH FEILING'S *Neville Chamberlain* forcibly reminds one of Carlyle's observation that a well written life is as rare as a well spent one. The efforts of this eminent historian of the Tory party to rehabilitate Chamberlain serve only to emphasize, ironically, the spiritual and intellectual poverty of the man who brought us "peace in our time." The best that can be said for this wretchedly written account is that it is as adequate as its subject. It was perhaps the latter's insipidity that drove the author to strain for a liveliness and piquancy lacking in Chamberlain himself. Since Feiling quotes liberally from Chamberlain himself, the result is often a compound of the inane and the trite set in an absurd and ridiculously bombastic context.

Appointed by the Chamberlain family to write this biography, Mr. Feiling has not betrayed their confidence by making critical use of the "full freedom" he assures us was granted him. He concedes to "the generation which has endured the last twenty years" the right to be "told all *possible* truth" (my italics). But he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

admits to omissions, "nine-tenths" due to "considerations of space." What of the other tenth? With a characteristic charity that sometimes verges on charlatanry, Mr. Feiling neglects to give us such a typical example of Chamberlain's astuteness as his deservedly classic remark that "Hitler missed the bus." Although some new material is presented, it is insignificant and casts little light upon the fateful years of office that Mr. Chamberlain was so careful to record for posterity in his diary and regular weekly letters. For such light we must await, among other things, the tenth suppressed. Meanwhile Mr. Feiling has failed in what he calls the "historian's duty" and trust.

Although we learn little not already known about affairs of state, Chamberlain's figure is etched clearly. From his own written record, all the more devastating because so ingenuous, there emerges the picture not so much of an ignorant as of an incredibly shallow and obtuse man who lacked the sensitivity and imagination to feel overwhelmed by his responsibilities. He generally measured events in personal terms; less than a week before he lost office, he was complacent enough to believe that he had routed his "enemies" and was naively happy because he would not have to "leave this lovely place," the Prime Minister's official residence at Chequers. Overshadowed earlier by a famous father and brother, he had developed, out of his frustration, an inexhaustible arrogance and stubbornness. Consistent failure to act correctly on crucial occasions, arising from what amounted to a genius for calling the wrong turn, did not make him the less certain of himself.

LLOYD GEORGE's judgment is apt: In a job requiring "great breadth and boldness of conception," Chamberlain exhibited a "narrow spirit of unimaginative officialism" and "a vein of self-sufficient obstinacy." He was a "man of rigid competency," useful in "conventional times and conventional positions," "indispensable for filling subordinate positions," but "lost in an emergency or in creative tasks at any time." This is all the more striking in that Lloyd George was not talking of Chamberlain as Prime Minister, but describing him as Minister of National Service in 1917—and the remarks were written before Chamberlain became Prime Minister. Subsequent events only further documented and underscored these remarks.

What was the nature and quality of the society that could bring such a man to the fore? Baldwin and Chamberlain, Harding and Coolidge; what political processes raised these men to eminence? Mr. Feiling's uncritical estimate of Chamberlain does not permit such questions. And yet, it is the task of the historian to raise them and to attempt to answer them.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

MARTIN GREENBERG has written reviews and articles for COMMENTARY, *Partisan Review,* and the *New Leader.* He is an editor with Schocken Books.

STEPHEN SPENDER, the English poet and critic, is now at Swarthmore College.

HAL LEHRMAN's book, *Russia's Europe,* just published by Appleton-Century, is considered by many to be the best book written to date on Southeastern Europe. Mr. Lehrman's foreign correspondence appeared in COMMENTARY and in other magazines and newspapers.

G. LEVI DELLA VIDA is professor of Arabic at the University of Pennsylvania.

JAMES RORTY is the author of *Advertising—Our Master's Voice,* as well as a number of other books.

HERBERT B. EHRMANN is a Boston attorney. He was, with William Thompson, original attorney in the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti, and wrote a book, *The Untried Case,* about that *cause célèbre.*

SAMUEL J. HURWITZ is a member of the History Department at Brooklyn College.

CURRENT BOOKS ON JEWISH SUBJECTS

COMMUNAL SICK-CARE IN THE GERMAN GHETTO. By JACOB RADER MARCUS. Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Press, 1947. 335 pp. (Ella H. Philipson memorial publications, volume 1.)

A description of Jewish communal care of the sick in German lands of the late medieval period.

COVENANT EVERLASTING: PALESTINE IN JEWISH HISTORY. By BERL LOCKER. New York, Sharon Books, 1947. 125 pp. $1.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A revision of A Stiff-Necked People (*London, Gollancz,* 1946).

FROM DREYFUS TO PETAIN: "THE STRUGGLE OF A REPUBLIC." By WILHELM HERZOG. Translated by WALTER SORELL. New York, Creative Age Press, 1947. 321 pp. $3.50.
An interpretation and recapitulation of the documents and facts in the Dreyfus case, connecting the Petain case to it as a sequel.

HOME IS THE HUNTED. By ABRAHAM BERNSTEIN. New York, Dial Press, 1947. 308 pp. $3.00.
A novel about a young war veteran who deliberately suppresses his Jewish origin in order to succeed in business.

IF I FORGET THEE: A PICTURE STORY OF MODERN PALESTINE. By MEYER LEVIN. New York, Viking, 1947. 143 pp. $3.50.
Still photographs from the current film "My Father's House," with text giving the story of the film.

LABOR ENTERPRISE IN PALESTINE: A HANDBOOK OF HISTADRUT ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS. By GERHARD MUEZNER. Foreword by ROBERT R. NATHAN. New York, Sharon Books, 1947. 83 pp. $1.50.
A summary of the accomplishments of Histadrut, the General Federation of Jewish Labor, in Palestine.

THE MACCABEES. By ELIAS BICKERMAN. New York, Schocken Books, 1947. 120 pp. $1.50. (Schocken Library, volume 6)

MINORITIES IN THE ARAB WORLD. By A. H. HOURANI. Oxford University Press, 1947. 140 pp. 10s.6d.

MODERN NATIONALISM AND RELIGION. By SALO WITTMAYER BARON. New York, Harper, 1947. 373 pp. $5.00. (Rauschenbusch Lectureship Foundation)
A comprehensive survey of the development of the state and its interrelationship with the religions of the world.

PALESTINE AND THE UNITED NATIONS: PRELUDE TO SOLUTION. By JACOB ROBINSON. Washington, Public Affairs Press, 1947. 277 pp. $3.25.
The record of the Palestinian question before the United Nations, from San Francisco till the end of the Special Session, May 15, 1947.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN NATHAN CARDOZO. Edited by MARGARET E. HALL. Foreword by EDWIN W. PATTERSON. New York, Fallon Law Book Co., 1947. 489 pp. $5.00.
Including the complete texts of "Nature of the Judicial Process," "Growth of the Law," "Paradoxes of Legal Science," and "Law and Literature."

THE JEW: HIS TRAGEDY AND HIS GREATNESS. By DAVID HADLER. London, Gollancz, 1947. 168 pp. 7s.6d.

TALMUD. Edited by I. IPSTEIN. London, Soncino Press, 1947. 32 volumes. First set, 8 volumes, £13.13s; second set, 8 volumes, £13.13s; third set, 8 volumes, £13.13s; fourth set, 8 volumes (ready December, 1947).

TEN RUNGS: HASIDIC SAYINGS. By MARTIN BUBER. New York, Schocken Books, 1947. 127 pp. $1.50. (Schocken Library, vol. 8)

THE TIGER BENEATH THE SKIN: STORIES AND PARABLES OF THE YEARS OF DEATH. By ZVI KOLITZ. New York, Creative Age Press, 1947. 172 pp. $2.50.
Stories of Jewish heroism and suffering under the Germans.

REPORT ON PALESTINE: REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE. Foreword by SENATOR ROBERT F. WAGNER. New York, Somerset Books, 1947. 213 pp. $2.50.
The official report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine.

COMMENTARY
is printed by
THE COMET PRESS, INC.
200 Varick Street, New York 14, N. Y.
WAtkins 4-6080
65
PRINTERS OF FINE BOOKLETS, BOOKS, AND PUBLICATIONS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED